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TOURISM

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Folk Sports in China

Journey into the Greater Shangri-la
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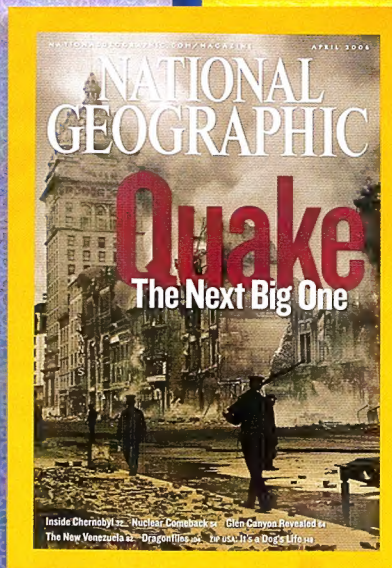
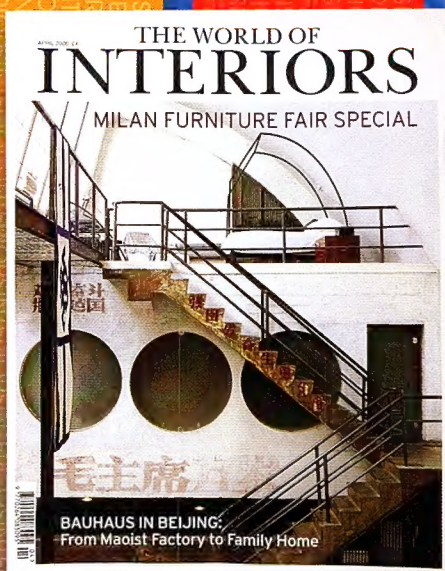
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Olympics Countdown I

The Forbidden City · The Olympian Dream

Article by Mickey Ching

Summer in Beijing is the title of a Kar Wai Wong's movie that was never released. However, this 2008 summer in Beijing will definitely be the grandest summer in the 850-year history of the city of Beijing.

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No. 316 Jul/Aug 2008

10 Ways to Experience the Spirit of Modern China during the Olympics



We are definitely proud of this moment. We are so proud of our country and our people in hosting this important international event, and resolute to make it the most successful Olympic Games ever. The Sichuan earthquake shows how much China has changed and offers a glimpse of its future — a more open and self-confident nation. As Premier Wen Jiabao noted in his encouragement to the victims, 'trials and tribulations serve only to revitalise the nation.' The spirit of modern China is here for all to see, even after the distress of the quake.

Here, *China Tourism* recommends you 10 ways to experience China during Beijing Olympics. Please join us, and discover the true China right away.

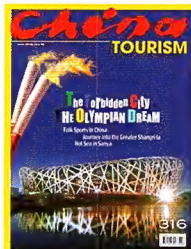
1. Take a ride to the Olympic venues or a 2-yuan journey anywhere else on the newly finished Beijing Subway line.
2. Bring a copy of *China Tourism* to tour the hutong and fascinating architecture of the new Olympic structures.
3. Bring your Olympic mascots with you when watching any of the games.
4. Learn about local life by chatting with pedicab drivers on your hutong tour.
5. Try one or two kinds of Chinese folk sports under Beijing's city wall.
6. Visit as many historical spots as you can fit into your time.
7. Stay in one of the *Siheyuan* hostels or Olympics family hotels and learn the story of their house.
8. Swim in the Houhai Lake with the locals.
9. Hang out in local cafés rather than in the international chains.
10. Bring your own cloth shopping bag for all your purchases of local goods.



Olympic mascots are with you during the games. (by Wang Jing)

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Beijing National Stadium, nicknamed the 'Bird Nest' (by Liao Pan/CNSPhoto)



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Lake Tai in Spring

Photos & Article by Xie Guanghui

Caressed by a gentle spring breeze, the old junks sailed on the glimmering Lake Tai, their outlines, together with the distant Xishan Island, all shrouded in mist, sometimes half hidden as if in a dream, and embraced by the vast stretch of green water.

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Discoveries

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Feature Story II

Seeking the Lost Horizon Journey into the Greater Shangri-la

Photos by Wang Chen, Lin Jinghua, Stephen Or Article by Stephen Or

To solve the conundrum, our reporters, armed with a copy of *Holic*, climbed mountains, traversed valleys and visited locals for an in-depth look at northwest Yunnan Province as described in the book, in a quest for the long-lost horizon...

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Crane-watch in the Snow-covered Zhaotong

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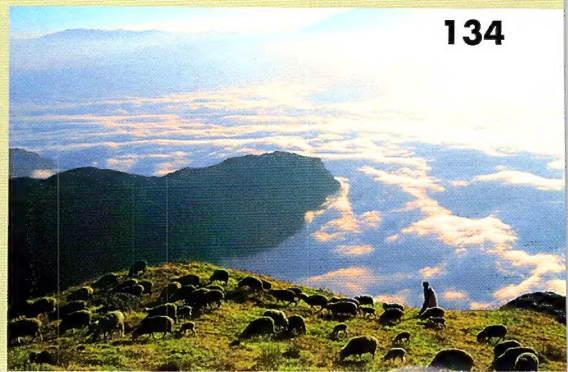
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China-Switzerland Direct Flights has Started

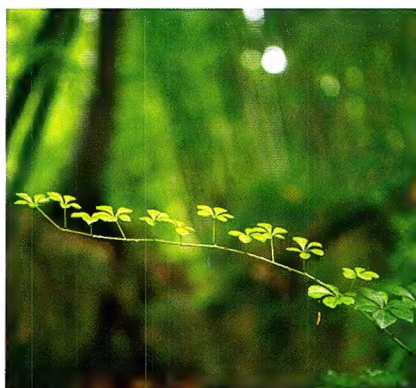
Swiss Airlines now launches daily flights from Shanghai to Zurich. The service is the first direct China-Switzerland flights. Flight LX189 takes off from Shanghai at 09:15 local time and arrives in Zurich at 15:40 local time. Flight LX188, leaves Zurich at 13:05 local time and arrive in Shanghai at 06:35.



China

China Freezes Price of Admission Tickets to Tourist Spots

The Chinese government has staged a national overhaul to axe overcharging in the admission tickets for tourist sites, banning further price rises in the coming 12 months and vowing to open most public museums, memorials and patriotic educational sites for free in two years.



Taiwan

Tourism Industry Gears Up for Mainland Tourists

Taiwan's tourism industry is gearing up for expanded cross-strait travel for mainland tourists starting in July. It's hoped that tourism from the mainland will help reinvigorate Taiwan's economy. 3,000 people will be allowed to travel to Taiwan everyday. That means one million per year, and a 1.3 billion US dollar business. For instance, Ali Mountain Tourst Centre and Sun Moon Lake are having trained guides and facilities ready to welcome mainland tourists, including writing in simplified Chinese.



China

BBC to Show Wild China

BBC will show a series of travel/nature shows on lesser known parts of China. ChinaContact will be launching a special exclusive tour to some of China's hidden treasures in October of 2008. The tour has been launched and presented since 20 May in London. See <http://www.greateasternstudio.co.uk> for more information.



Hong Kong

Thirteen Airlines Increase Surcharge

Due to continuously rising oil prices, the Civil Aviation Department of Hong Kong has given formal approval to 13 airlines to maintain or increase surcharges on passenger transportation from 1 June. The thirteen airlines are Aeroflot, Air Canada, Air China, Air Mauritius, All Nippon Airways, Cathay Pacific Airways, China Eastern Airlines, Royal Nepal Airlines, Pakistan International Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Shanghai Airlines, Singapore Airlines, and Turkish Airlines.

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Seasons Hotel Fabulous Choice to Stay in Taipei

Seasons Hotel Classic & Seasons Hotel Royal

The spacious and luxurious Roman style lobby, adored with statues of Greek nymphs, completely reveals exception grandeur in the hotel. The splendid hallway encroaches over a luxurious space, presenting the interior of the hotel in a dazzling style of neoclassical Roman elegance. Each guest room is designed in a unique style with handmade red wood furniture. An array of choices is available to suit your tastes and gives you an exclusive space for a romantic, safe, and private stay.

Prologues of the Tour to Taipei

Situated in the bustling Western district of Taipei City on the Nanjing West Road, Seasons Hotel locates right in the main artery for Chongqing Circle and the Dihua business district. It is a place that takes culture, historic landmarks, and modernity into its bosom and an important pivot point for Taipei's traffic. Neighbouring the century-old Dihua Street, Taipei Railway Station, Ningxia Night Market, Zhongshan MRT Station, and a lineup of large shopping centres are all within walking distance. Be it for holiday, shopping, or business, Seasons is your best choice. ☑



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China Imposes New Visa Rules

The Chinese Government has imposed more stringent requirements for visa application because of the Beijing Olympics. Chinese Embassy confirmed that stricter rules had been implemented temporarily until the end of the Games in August. Both business travellers and tourists to China are required to submit their confirmed flight itinerary and hotel reservation.



More Professional Pedicab Tour Service in Beijing

Beijing Tourism Bureau announced that all tours of the city's Shichahai Lake area are now operated by officially franchised operators. About 300 new pedicabs — sporting dark red roofs and copper inlays — hit the streets of Beijing this week under the control of a team of licensed drivers, uniformly dressed in traditional Chinese shirts. Only licensed drivers are permitted to conduct such tours. Drivers would ask passengers for tips, provide only scant information about interesting sites and even change the routes. To monitor the new service, a complaints hotline will soon be set up.

573,000 American Travellers Are Expected to Travel to China

A report expects 25.1 million Americans to travel internationally this summer, an increase of 2.6% over the 24.5 million, who were estimated to have travelled overseas last summer. China and India are expected to see the largest increases in travel from the US this summer, with China expected to see a 13.4% increase (573,000 American travellers). Travel to Canada and Mexico this summer is expected to be similar to last year.



Macao Government Hauls Permissions for More Casinos

Macao will stop approving land for new casinos, slowing a gaming explosion that threatened social stability and lured companies including MGM Mirage and Las Vegas Sands Corp. to invest billions of dollars to build resorts. Macao will also stop granting new casino licenses, limiting the number of operators to six 'for a period'. The city last year faced labour union protests against the industry. The number of Macao casinos has more than doubled to 29 since the government ended billionaire Stanley Ho's 40-year gaming monopoly.



CNN Promotes China Tourism for Independent travellers

CNN online is doing China for the budget travel section! Visit <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/TRAVEL/05/21/china.transportation/> and you can find several ways to book transportation, accommodation and more. This means a lot to China tourism as it has never been a too-convenient destination for westerners. But this introduction shows big improvement on the infrastructure in China which makes it much easier now to travel without a tour group.

Direct Flight From Beijing To Warsaw Gets New Slots

Polish Airlines have granted the new slots at Beijing Airport. The new slot time is adjusted to 7:10 am arrival and 9:25 am departure at Beijing time, which is effective from 1 June 2008. The new adjustment can be more convenient for the Chinese passengers. Also the new slots can enable Polish Airlines to promote this flight in China. Flights from Warsaw will be operated three times a week on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Return flights from Beijing will be flown on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays.



Zagat Published Guide to Beijing

Westerners planning to attend the 2008 Summer Olympics (8 to 24 Aug) in Beijing will be able to buy the first Zagat guide to the city. The guide has organised the opinions of 1,244 people surveyed into categories like favorite restaurants, hotels, nightspots, shops and tourist attractions. It also has helpful phrases, travel tips and fold-out maps of the city and the subway system. It costs US\$15.95 in bookstores, check online on their website if you want to buy it elsewhere.

Air Berlin Takes off for China

Air Berlin has started up its long-haul routes to China. There are five flights a week from Dusseldorf to the Chinese cities of Beijing and Shanghai. There are feeder flights from Germany (including from Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Nuremberg and Stuttgart), Switzerland (Zurich) and Austria (Vienna) to both destinations.

Beijing Imposes Broader Smoking Ban Ahead of Olympics

In effort to create a smoke-free Olympics, Beijing has expanded its non-smoking policy in more public places to cover a range of areas from hotels to parks. Following a regulation implemented in 1996, the measures have been expanded to include fitness centers, cultural relic sites, offices, meeting rooms, dining halls, toilets, and aisles and lifts in buildings belonging to government or private institutions.

Lonely Planet Launches Travel Video Channel on YouTube

The travel Channel on YouTube™, the leading online video community will feature a selection of the best travel videos from Lonely Planet's own online video-sharing website, LonelyPlanet.tv and exclusive content such as previews and behind-the-scenes footage from upcoming Lonely Planet Television shows. The Channel will launch with 20 videos from LonelyPlanet.tv, and new clips will be added every week.



HNA Group Signs with Yichang for Tourism Cooperation

The Yichang (Hubei Province) government and HNA Group have signed a tourism development cooperation agreement on Yichang's air transport in Haikou. According to the agreement, the two parties will further strengthen their cooperation to build Sanxia Airport into an important regional airport in the western areas of Hubei and the eastern areas of Chongqing.



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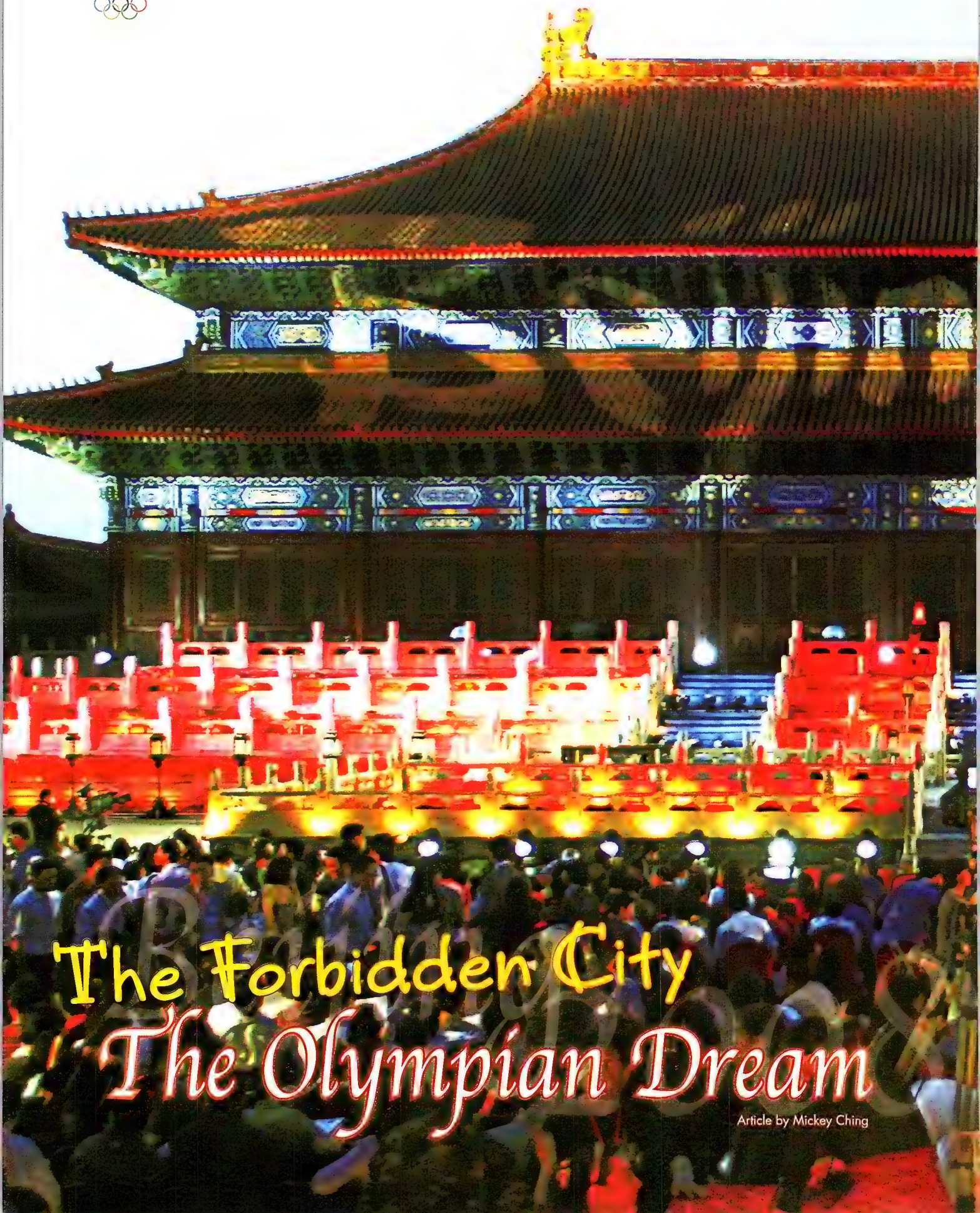
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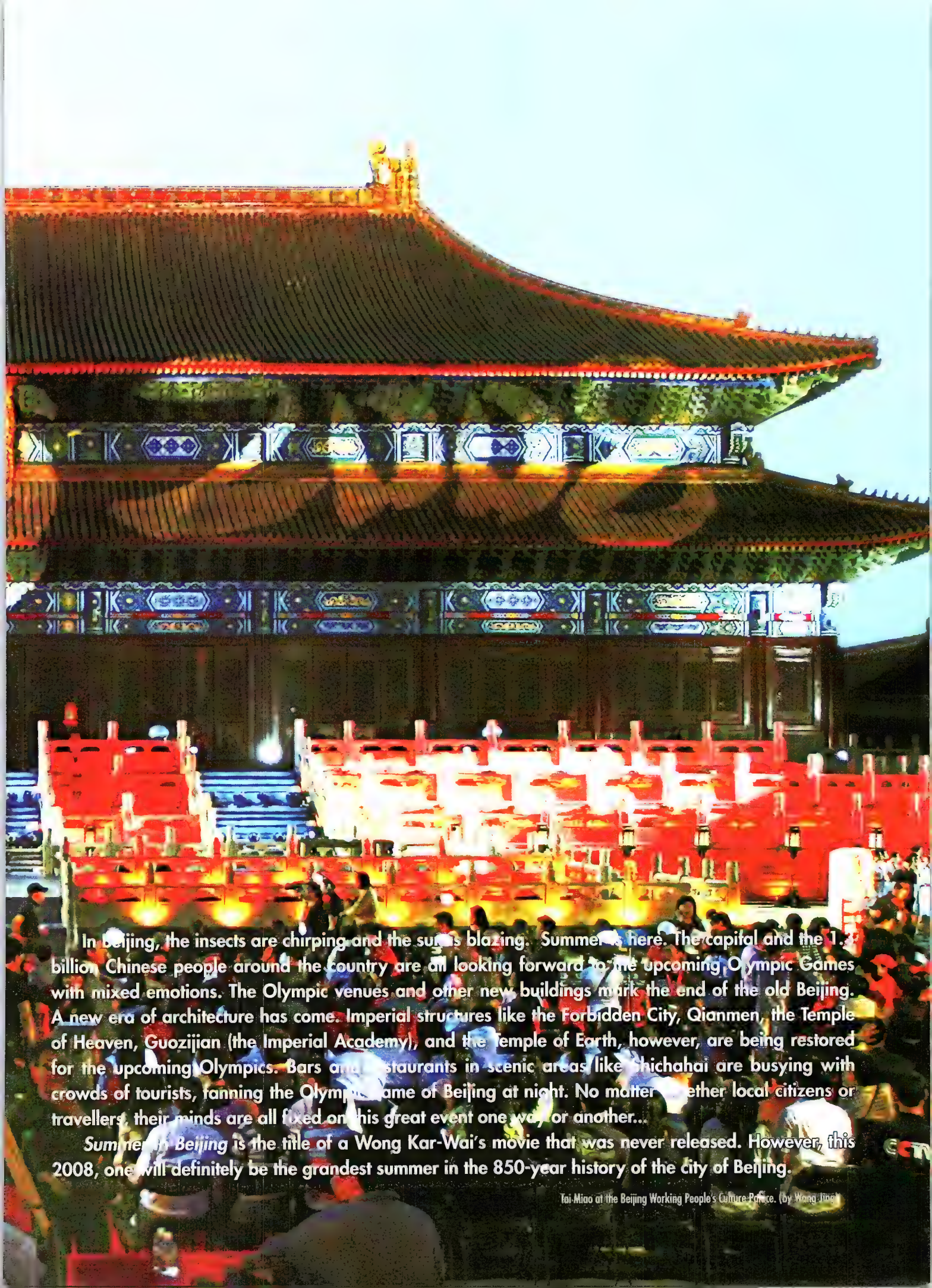
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The Forbidden City The Olympian Dream

Article by Mickey Ching



In Beijing, the insects are chirping and the sun is blazing. Summer is here. The capital and the 1.4 billion Chinese people around the country are all looking forward to the upcoming Olympic Games with mixed emotions. The Olympic venues and other new buildings mark the end of the old Beijing. A new era of architecture has come. Imperial structures like the Forbidden City, Qianmen, the Temple of Heaven, Guozijian (the Imperial Academy), and the Temple of Earth, however, are being restored for the upcoming Olympics. Bars and restaurants in scenic areas like Shichahai are busying with crowds of tourists, fanning the Olympic flame of Beijing at night. No matter whether local citizens or travellers, their minds are all fixed on this great event one way or another...

Summer in Beijing is the title of a Wong Kar-Wai's movie that was never released. However, this 2008, one will definitely be the grandest summer in the 850-year history of the city of Beijing.

Tai Miao at the Beijing Working People's Culture Palace. (by Wang Jing)

An Overview of Olympic Venues in Beijing



Zaha Hadid, the famous female architect from Iraq, used to describe China in this way: 'China is like a giant canvas, which can cover endless creativities.' Beijing, China's capital, is the best experimental ground for architects like Zaha.

The colossal elliptic Bird's Nest and the square Water Cube, The Giant Egg on the side of Tian'anmen Square (the heart of Beijing),

the concrete Digital Beijing Building, combines with four separate constructions (the Olympics 'command posts'), the Terminal 3 building of the Capital Airport of Beijing in the shape of a giant dragon and Beijing CCTV Headquarters, which looks like a grand gate. All these modern venues and buildings are bringing tremendous changes to Beijing, this ancient capital of the Yuan Dynasty (1271 — 1368) and one of the six ancient capitals in China...



Bird's Nest under constructions. (photo courtesy of Arup, by Ben McMillan)

The National Stadium (Bird's Nest)

The most impressive Olympic venue is the Bird's Nest. The inspiration for the Bird's Nest design comes from the image of traditional Chinese-glazed porcelain, the Chan Process in folk art and the Loukong practice in Chinese traditional art. The wonder of this structure is that it has no column to support its framework. The main body's elements converge into a grid formation, just like a bird's nest with interlocking branches and twigs. The steel framework of this stadium weighs 42,000 tons. Its concrete stand has upper, middle and lower parts, with a seating capacity of 91,000, including 11,000 temporary seats. The bowl structure enables spectators to have a direct view with no disturbance. The upper part of the roofing structure of the National Stadium is covered by a transparent ETFE membrane, which is weatherproof.

The stadium can at least be used for 100 years. It can withstand an eight-magnitude earthquake and its fire resistance capability is first-rate. Because of its ground-breaking design, there have been discussions about the appearance, material and funds. When construction stopped for half a year, rumours were everywhere flew around that there would be no Bird's Nest. In the end, the original plan of a collective roof was cancelled. The broadening of the roof reduced the number of seats.

Besides its grid formation, the glorious colour of this new landmark is also stunning. Its red seats and outside grey steel framework reflect the two main colours in the Forbidden City.

Location: Olympic Green

Events: the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games, the track and field competitions, and the football finals.

Transportation: Bus No. 113, 386, 407, 656, 737, 740, 753, 804, 827, 939, 944 and 983. Get off at Beichen Qiao West or get off at the National Stadium by Bus No. 510 and 839. Olympic Sports Centre Station, Olympic Subway line.



▲ Clear signs look like images in video games at the entrance. (by Mickey Ching)



by Wang Jing



·There are clear English signs at the entrance, just like the Hong Kong Coliseum.

·Both inside and outside the Bird's Nest, you can see many mini-models of the Bird's Nest. The floor lamps and the chandelier inside sit perfectly with this giant Bird's Nest.

·The keynote colour of the seat arena is red. The subtle design of the washroom and elevator signs look like images in video games.

·Aside from the two giant TV screens on both ends of the stadium, there are many mini-TVs above the seats, providing a better view of the Games events.



The National Aquatics Centre (The Water Cube)

With its blue bubble-shaped appearance and changing colours at night, the Water Cube looks like it's been transported from a fairy land. The design concept is based on the natural formation of soap bubbles.

The centre contains five swimming pools flanked by 17,000 seats and restaurants. It is the largest Olympic aquatics centre in history. The structure is covered by a semi-transparent ETFE membrane, a modified co-polymer called ethylene-tetra-fluoro-ethylene, or ETFE. The outer bubble layer is composed of 3,000 random air cushions of different shape. ETFE is a tough and recyclable material. Compared to glass, it is 1% the weight, but transmits more light. It is also self-cleaning on rainy days (due to its non-stick surface). The outer layer of ETFE is strong enough for it to be used as building material in Beijing, endure bad weather condition like storms, hailstones, sandstorms, or even the weight of a car. It is fire-proof and heat-proof. In addition, it can be stretched three or four times longer without splitting. Only at a higher temperature than 715°C can a small hole be burned in it. As an energy-saving stadium, it has a rainwater collection system, and can take full advantage of the natural light for as long as nine hours.

The design of the undulating shape of the Bird's Nest and its attendant venue, the square Water Cube, echoes the traditional Chinese philosophic concept — the image of the round heaven and the square earth. The red

The Water Cube, largest Olympic aquatics centre in history.
(photo courtesy of Arup, by Ben McMillan)



▲ The special illuminated drinking area. (by Mickey Ching)

seats of the Bird's Nest and the blue Water Cube fully represent Chinese philosophy — the combination of yin and yang. The two venues are outstanding symbols of the Beijing Olympics.

Location: Olympic Green

Events: swimming, diving, synchronised swimming, water-polo.

Transportation: Bus No. 113, 386, 407, 656, 737, 740, 753, 804, 827, 939, 944 and 983. get off at Beichen Qiao West or get off at the National Stadium by Bus No. 510 and 839. Olympic Sports Centre Station, Olympic Subway Line.



· The blue bubble world outside the stadium and the image of H₂O and waves inside fully embody the water world concept.

· The two-storey building has clear signs on both floors.

· Press the button of the drinking machine, and it will illuminate in a second.

· Seats are reserved for disabled people.

The National Centre for the Performing Arts (The Giant Egg)

Among all the new landmarks of Beijing, the most controversial is the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), nicknamed 'The Giant Egg'. Tian'anmen Square has always been at the heart of Beijing. Around the square, the structures like Chairman Mao's Memorial Hall, The Great Hall of the People, National Museum and the Forbidden City link the Dragon Pulse of Beijing (the central axis of Beijing). Compared with the Forbidden City, which has a history of over 600 years, the Giant Egg looks like a monster from outer space, completely at odds with the traditional architectural complex. Some architects insist this 'poisoned egg' should be blown up before the Games, but the French architect Paul Andreu stands by his design concept. Again, the impossible becomes possible in Beijing.

Covered with about 20,000 titanium panels and over 1,000 pieces of extra-white glass sheets, the egg-shaped framework is comprised of arch steel girders. The dome, weighing 6,750 tons, has no beams to support it. It is China's largest span at present. Since the height of the centre can't surpass that of The Great Hall of the People, 60% of its construction work is underground. Surrounded by a man-made lake, the centre is said to be designed like a floating pearl.

Passing through an 80-metre-long hallway that goes underneath the lake, you'll arrive at the lobby with the glass ceiling above you. Under the blue sky, you can see on both sides the exhibition hall. With its grand dome plus the precious Brazilian rosewood, this luxury design wins it the top place among all the theatres in the world. When night falls, the whole structure is gloriously illuminated. The three main performing halls are the Opera House, Concert Hall, and Theatre. They are independent while at the same time, inter-connected by aerial corridors. The keynote colour of the Opera Hall is a gorgeous gold; while refreshing white is the main colour of the Concert Hall. As for the Theatre, the wall is decorated with folk-coloured silk. The main stage is a cylindrical revolving platform. The height is adjustable to make different stage effects.

Location: No.2 West
Chang'an Avenue,
Xicheng District.

Transportation: Exit C at
Tian'anmen West Station,
Subway Line One.
Website: www.chncpa.org

The egg-shaped framework with arch steel girders. (by Mickey Ching)

National Indoor Stadium (A Folding Fan)

Joining the group of landmark structures in the area, including the National Aquatics Centre to the south and the National Convention Centre to the north, the National Indoor Stadium has a seating capacity of 18,000 people. The frame is composed of vertical steel beams and a large glass curtain wall, resembling an open traditional Chinese folding fan. Covering a total surface area of 19,000 square metres, the glass curtain wall is made up of a visible glass curtain wall frame, a point support glass curtain wall, and aluminum glass. All of the glass is low-emissivity (Low-E) glass, which can keep warm, provide insulation and also act as a filter for ultra-violet rays, ensuring no outside interference of weather during competitions.

Location: Olympic Green

Sports: Artistic gymnastics, trampoline, and handball competitions.

Transportation: Bus No. 113, 386, 407, 656, 737, 740, 753, 804, 827, 939, 944 and 983. Get off at Beichen Qiao West or get off at the National Stadium by Bus No. 510 and 839. Olympic Sports Centre Station, Olympic Subway line.

Wukesong Gymnasium

The radiating Wukesong Gymnasium, as great as the Bird's Nest and the Water Cube, is the largest stadium in western Beijing. It covers an area of 168,000 square metres with a capacity of 18,000 spectators.

The gleaming undulating surface is made up of aluminum alloy boards. The next layer is a low-E glass facade system. Outside the gym are six bridges linking the entrances. The characteristic of the bridges is that they are only fixed on one end. Walking into the building, you can see the funnel-shaped LED display system in the centre. It is the first multi-colour, high-definition LED display in China. Around the stadium is a cultural square of 80,000 square metres, consisting of fountains and landscaped gardens, a good place to relax after enjoying an exhilarating event.



▲ The 18,000-spectator capacity Wukesong Gymnasium. (by Wang Jing)

Location: Wukesong

Culture and Sports Centre, corner of Chang'an Street and West 4th Ring Road.

Events: Basketball.

Transportation: Wukesong Station, Subway Line One.



Wukesong Gymnasium. (by Wang Jing)

New CCTV Headquarters (The Pants)

The National Centre for the Performing Arts, the Bird's Nest and the new CCTV Headquarters are regarded as China's top three new architectural projects in the 21st century. They set unprecedented records in China in terms of cost, structure or appearance. The twisted skyscraper consists of two separate towers (hence its nickname, The Pants) that are joined by a tremendous 15-storey cantilever in the air. What's more, the two towers are at a height of 230 metres, leaning 6° off vertical in both directions. Obviously, the CCTV Headquarters has redefined skyscrapers. In order to withstand serious earthquakes, it is reported that the cost has increased from 5 billion yuan to 10 billion yuan.

The completed headquarters building will include the main building of China Central Television (CCTV), Television Cultural Centre (TVCC) and a Media Park. During 2008 Olympic Games, CCTV will broadcast Olympic events non-stop.

Location: No.32 Dongsanhuan Middle Road, Chaoyang District.

Transportation: Jintaixizhao Station, Subway Line Ten.

Website: www.cctv.com



Photo courtesy of CNS

The Digital Beijing Building

It's no exaggeration to say that the Digital Beijing building is the 'brain' of the Beijing Olympics. With no windows, the appearance of this concrete structure resembles a circuit board, a building in a sci-fi world. It serves as the control and data centre, communication hub and logistics base for the Games. The building is a combination of four separate constructions. The structure has great visual effect and opens to a broad view from inside. The LED screens on the glass curtain wall provide 24 hours Olympic information. The west and middle part is the digital area equipped with sci-fi-style pedestrian bridges and digital carpet. After the Games, it will become an E-centre, the municipal government's

resource, for emergency-response command and information services.



Location: Beichen West Road, Chaoyang District (west side of Olympic Green)

Transportation: Olympic Park Station, Olympic Subway Line.

photo courtesy of CNS

T3 — Beijing Capital International Airport (The Giant Dragon)

Terminal 3 of Beijing Capital International Airport came into use in March this year. People who have been here think that it is another version of Hong Kong International Airport in terms of both arrangement and interior design. Because these two are both designed by British architect Norman Foster, who also designed London Stansted Airport, the third international airport in London.

The newly-expanded T3 is divided into T3-A, T3-B and T3-C, covering 930,000 square metres. It now serves 35 million passengers each year, and

the figure is estimated to increase to 90 million in 2012 when aircraft will take off and land 500,000 times and the cargo throughput will reach 1.8 million tons.

The careful planning that went into T3 saves passengers the trouble of changing between floors. Compared with Hong Kong Airport, it has a special feature. Being 'the largest indoor architecture in the world', T3 resembles a giant oriental dragon facing the northeast of Beijing with its head up. The dragon-shaped terminal is divided into five parts: The parking area — 'the mouth of the dragon', the hall of

the airport — 'the body of the dragon', the main roof — 'the spine of the dragon', the uneven roof windows — 'the scales of the dragon', and the two roads that link to the traffic network of Beijing City — 'the dragon beard'. It is expected that the sub-line that connects T3 will be operational before the Games. At that time, it'll only take 16 minutes from Beijing Capital International Airport to the downtown Dongzhimen area.

A unique aspect of T3 is its arched roof, which is made of a steel frame of 12 different colours like red and gold.

Translated by Huang He



Terminal 3 is similar to Hong Kong International Airport. (by Zhu Jianhui)

Beijing's Bourgeois Duet



Nanluoguxiang

Still hanging out at Houhai? Seems a little out of date. The Tianhefang (Lotus Lane) and Yandai (Tobacco Pipe) Hutong close to Houhai are Beijing's hip new hangouts. Tianhefang features unique restaurants and bars while Yandai Hutong has a lot of interesting boutique stores. There is another lane that quickly became famous after Houhai. That is Nanluoguxiang (South Gong and Drum Lane), a lane of cafés. The internationally known Central Academy of Drama, cultural remains and famous people's former residences can all be found there. It is such a joy touring around the *hutong* in a pedicab / rickshaw. Nanluoguxiang has definitely become a trendy entertainment spot following the likes of Sanlitun and Houhai.

Photos by Zhang Nan and Mickey Ching
Article by Mickey Ching

Tales of Nanluoguxiang 南锣鼓巷

As one of the oldest street blocks in Beijing, Nanluoguxiang was built when the capital city of the Yuan Dynasty Dadu took shape. It was a dividing line between Zhaohui Fang and Jinggong Fang (Fang means street block). The Yuan Dynasty (1271 — 1368) government divided Beijing into 50 fang. It stretches 786 m, with its south end connecting to Di'anmen East Street and north end to Gulou (Drum Tower) East Street. Many of the ancient sites can still be found today, among them, Keyuan Garden is considered one of the most artistically valued among the late Qing Dynasty private gardens. However, apart from Maodun's Former Residence, none have been opened to the public. Sights in this area include China's last empress Wanrong's Residence at Mao'er (Cat) Hutong No. 35-37, Senggelingqin's Mansion at Chaodou Hutong No. 77, Hong Chengchou's Mansion (Hong, a general who surrendered to the Qing government by the end of Ming Dynasty) at Nanluoguxiang No. 59...



Xiao Xin's Cafe 小新的店

You can't help but notice this small café when passing by. It is good choice for afternoon tea. It has huge wooden windows from which one can people-watch. International tourists often hang out in this place, holding books and curiously looking around. On its bookshelves there are old toys, books, magazines and a nine-inch black-and-white TV, which brings people back to 'the good old days'. Xiao Xin is actually the owner's name. He is a shy young man who worked and learned his baking skills at Here Bar and Sculpting Time café before he opened his own café. The house specialties include cheese cake and fruit pizza carefully prepared by Xiao Xin himself.

Address: Nanluoguxiang No. 103, Dongcheng District
Tel: (10) 6403 6956 Opening hours: 09:00-02:00

Zha Zha Cafe 喜鹊咖啡館

Aromatic coffee is not the only thing attracting customers here. The glazed tiles, grey brick walls and several huge glass windows simply lure you in. Although once you get inside, it's a completely different environment. Next to the windows are sofas. As the name (Zha Zha is the magpie's call in Chinese) indicates, this café is full of fun.



Address: Nanluoguxiang No. 101, Dongcheng District
Tel: (10) 8402 4851

Grifted

Your attention will be drawn to this shop's display window adorned by a series of dolls with exaggerated designs, such as Cuban leader Che Guevara (1928 - 1967) with a cigar in his mouth, a Shanghai woman in qipao dress, a cutie doll of female Peking opera actress and Chairman Mao. Other eye-catching products include Chinese lanterns painted with Chairman Mao's image, umbrellas printed with Mao's caricature and the cloth doll of a big-belly monk. All the products are imprinted with mixed Chinese and post-modern styles.

The most impressive thing is that every piece of Grifted's products were designed by the shop-owner, PP, an overseas Chinese. They are handmade and limited editions. The shop slogan is, 'We will make things, fun and unique!'



Address: Nanluoguxiang No. 32, Dongcheng District
Tel: (10) 6406 2716 Website: www.grifted.com.cn



Tibet Café 西藏咖啡館

Walking along Nanluoguxiang, you can't miss this café with its orange walls, Tibetan-style drapes, *Thangka* and other Tibetan knick-knacks. What attracts me here the most is the classical Tibetan music. The staff members are all real Tibetans, and its menu provides a wide range of genuine Tibetan food. If you are tired of coffee, chocolate and cheese cake, why don't you come here for a cup of strong-flavoured butter tea and *tsangba* (a treat made of barley flour)?

Address: Nanluoguxiang No. 97, Dongcheng District
 Tel: (10) 6402 2165 Opening hours: 10:00-00:00



Passby Bar 過客

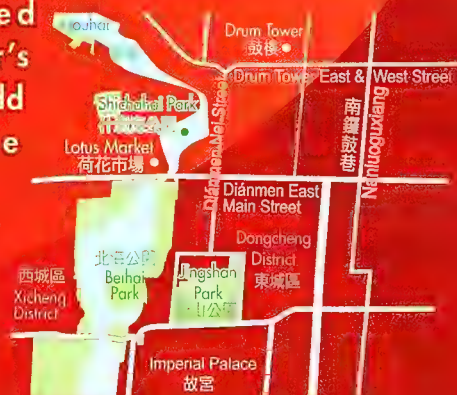
At Nanluoguxiang everyone knows this bar. It was opened before Nanluoguxiang ever became famous. As its name card says, 'Passby started as a bar, but now it's our life style. What will it be in the future? We don't know...' But it is a must-see café and bar. Moreover, its shop is also worth visiting. The merchandise includes T-shirts to postcards, badges, stickers, folders and picture frames. Their patterns are slogans and mottoes popular during the Cultural Revolution, interesting and unique.

Address: Nanluoguxiang No. 108 or 114, Dongcheng District
 Tel: (10) 8403 8004 Website: www.passbybar.com

Lotus Lane

Lotus Lane is a bar street that developed along with Shichahai. Every bar / restaurant here has comfortable sofas, with their windows open to most of the year and purple-red gauze drapes waving in breeze. The street exudes a luxurious atmosphere. Sitting in a private room on the second floor or the patio on the third floor, you can take in a spectacular view of the Qianhai Lake. At night, customers like to sit on the patio, drinking and chatting. Every shop-front is decorated with red lanterns, which are reflected on the water's surface and add charm to the glittering lake.

Translated by Ling Yu



Tales of Lotus Lane 荷花市場

Lotus Lane, formerly the Lotus Market, was a seasonal market along the west bank of Qianhai Lake. During the late Qing Dynasty (1368 — 1644) and early Republic of China (1911 — 1949), it was open after every Dragon-boat Festival in May and closed at the Chinese Ghost Festival on the 15th day of the seventh month of lunar calendar. The market got its name from the nearby lotus flowers that were in full bloom during that period.

The market used to sell daily necessities, curios, calligraphy, paintings, handicrafts, local snacks, fresh lotus seeds, water chestnuts and lotus roots. Moreover, various entertaining performances found their stage here, such as variety shows, story-telling and drum singing. It seemed busier than the temple fair of Changdian (an area in south Beijing) during the spring festival. After the Republic of China, the Lotus Market gradually lost its fame and popularity. Finally it had to be shut down. Not until 1990 was it reopened. Later, with the rising of the Shichahai bar area, the Lotus Market was transformed into today's Lotus Lane bar street concentrated with more than ten high-end bars and restaurants.



South Silk Road 茶馬古道

Lotus Lane has many well-known cafés, restaurants and bars such as, Starbucks, Buffalo Stone, Blue Lotus and Sex And Da City, just to name a few.

When speaking of the Yunnan-style restaurant, South Silk Road, many who have been there will recommend its wild vegetables and meat, ethnic-style food, new-style Yunnan dishes and tea-cooked dishes.

The ethnic-style dishes include: Yuxi Small-pot Rice Noodles, Shaotong Chicken Stewed with Taro, Mengzi Glutinous Rice Cake, Lugu Lake Fish. The new-style Yunnan dishes are Shark Fin & Mushroom Hotpot, Gongshan Double Treasure, Double-cooked Meat, Bamboo-basket Tofu Steamed with Roses, Butterfly Fountain. And the tea-cooked dishes include Weaver Cooked with Tea and Plums, Squid Stir-fried with Pu'er Tea and Tea-smelling Bones.

Ninety percent of the dishes in this restaurant use ingredients directly from Yunnan, like edible tree bark, tender pine needles, various mushrooms with names you've never heard of, Yunnan ham and mellow cheese glutinous rice cakes that cannot be found anywhere but in Yunnan.

With a modern decor, the restaurant has a completely glass outer wall. Sitting next to the window, you'll enjoy a fantastic view of the Qianhai Lake while eating delicious food.



Address: Lotus Lane 12-13, Qianhai-Xiyao No. A19, Shichahai
Tel: (10) 6615 5515 Opening hours: 10:30-02:00

7 Hot Choices for Accommodation during Beijing Olympics

It is estimated that over 500,000 visitors will come to Beijing for the 2008 Olympics in August. Accommodation prices of star-rated hotels, family inns and youth hostels in Beijing have been soaring, five times the normal price. Even a basic room still costs several hundred yuan. So where to stay during the Olympics? We have selected seven hot options for you, including 'Olympic family hotels', special quadrangle suites, chain hotels and university hostels. We hope this can help your Olympic trip planning!

Photos and Article by Mickey Ching

7. Olympic Family Hotels — Classical Quadrangle Suites

During the Olympic Games, the Beijing government is recruiting 1,000 local families to provide special accommodation to be known as 'Olympic family hotels'. The houses are all classic Chinese-style *Siheyuan* (known as quadrangle suites). The 1,000 families are located in all the eight districts of Beijing, among which are four major districts: Dongcheng, Xicheng, Chaoyang, and Haidian, which are adjacent to the Olympic venues.

Houses should be quadrangle suites with owners who can provide basic accommodation for guests during the Games. As well, the family should have at least one member who can communicate with visitors in fluent English. They need to be

able to offer special Chinese foods like noodles and dumplings. Also, the houses are required to have fire-fighting equipment and modern bathroom facilities.

Both the China International Travel Service Head Office and China Travel Service Head Office are in charge of the promotion and planning. The Olympic family hotels will be open from 1st August to 31st September at an estimated rate of 400~600 yuan / day.

China International Travel Service Head Office

Website: www.cits.net Tel: (10) 6522 2991



2. Inns in Hutong — Get to Know the Traditional Chinese Culture

The Olympic family hotels are great, but their number is limited, so we recommend accommodation in *hutong* for your reference.

☆ Xinyuan Inn 鑫園客棧

Yandai Xiejie Street is one of the hot places of interest in Beijing. Bars, cafes and shops are attracting crowds of tourists to this ancient *hutong*, (lanes). To stay here in Xinyuan Inn, you can enjoy not only the scenery of Houhai Park, but also the culture of traditional Chinese Hutong. Its characteristic is 'staying in the *hutong*, old street, and hotel with centuries of history'. The inn is decorated in traditional Chinese-style with a simple but elegant environment. It has 35 guestrooms including deluxe suites, standard rooms and single rooms. On the second floor is a Pavilion Bar, where guests may enjoy the beautiful sites of Shichahai scenic area and the Drum Tower while drinking and relaxing.

Xinyuan Inn

Website: www.hljh.com Tel: (10) 6401 4753

Address: No.21 Yandai Xiejie Street, Xicheng District

On-line price during Olympics: single room: 888 yuan,
standard Room: 1,188 yuan, deluxe suite: 2,688 yuan



Beijing Citycourt Hotel 北京城市庭園客棧

There are many special stores, restaurants and bars as well as inns in the *hutong* around Drum Tower area. The Citycourt Hotel at Liulisi Hutong opened this year and is one of the quadrangle inns at Shichahai scenic area. The compound features flavours of Chinese traditional structure. It has 24 guestrooms, including standard rooms, single rooms and honeymoon rooms with bathroom, access to internet and IDD telephone. The little courtyard provides the opportunity for strolling and resting.

Beijing Citycourt Hotel

Website: www.citycourthotel.com Tel: (10) 6402 6396

Address: No.14 Liulisi Hutong of Dongcheng District

Price during Olympics: single room: 1,600 yuan, standard room and king-size room: 1,900 yuan



Lotus Hostel 蓮舍

The Lotus Hostel is a quadrangle complex similar to a youth hostel. It is located in the centre of the Quadrangle Protection Area of Xicheng District. The Lotus flower is the keynote of its decoration. Numbers of this plant flourish along the corridor connecting the reception desk and guestrooms. The hotel is very popular among foreign tourists because of its traditional design. Rooms include standard rooms, 4-bed-rooms and 6-bed dorms in the youth hostel style. It has a cyber room, safety lockers and a lotus tea house, where the Chinese tea culture and special snacks can be enjoyed.

Lotus Hostel

Website: www.lotushostel.cn Tel: (10) 6612 8341

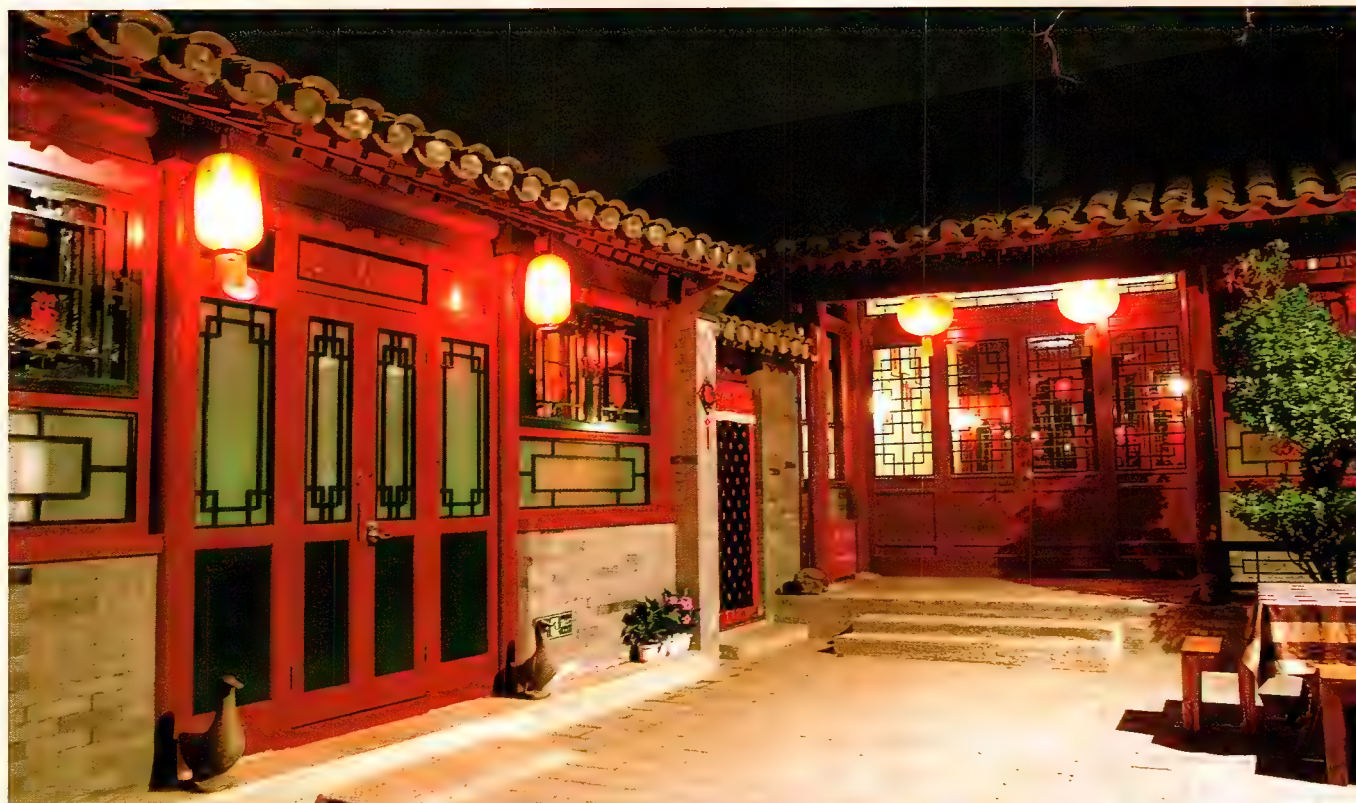
Address: No.29 Xisi Bei 7 Tiao, Xicheng District

Price during Olympics: quad room / 6-bed-room: 500 yuan / person;
Chinese traditional room: 1,300 yuan; single room / twin room (no bathroom): 1,300 yuan; single room / twin room (with bathroom): 1,800 yuan



3. Quadrangle Complex in Hutong — A Deluxe Choice

If you find the quadrangle complex mentioned above doesn't satisfy your taste for luxury, the *Siheyuan* themed hotels may interest you. They have been recently touted as the hippest in Beijing. The large courtyard and suites are decorated with most interesting flair.



Zhongtang Hotel 中堂客棧

The Zhongtang Hotel is a quadrangle compound with 17 guestrooms of different decorating styles. This courtyard used to belong to an extremely important minister, Ertai in the Qing Dynasty (1840 — 1911). The rooms are delicately decorated with arhats, curtains and kang beds and all are different. Each room and suite has a transparent ceiling completed in coloured glaze. The guestrooms are limited and most of the guests are visitors from overseas. It is equipped with wireless Internet access. At night, you can surf online and watch the stars in a perfectly tranquil environment.

Zhongtang Hotel

Website: www.tanghotel.cn Tel: (10) 6617 1369

Address: No.12 Xisi Bei 2 Tiao, Beijing

Price during Olympics: ranging from 2,995 yuan to 6,800 yuan



Beijing Lu Song Yuan 吕松园

The original owner of Lu Song Yuan, this large compound, was the Grand General of the Qing Dynasty. It has over 50 guestrooms. There is an open air cafe in the main courtyard surrounded by a corridor and bamboo trees. The decorations are in the traditional style of the Ming Dynasty (1368 — 1644).

Beijing Lu Song Yuan

Website: www.the-silk-road.com/hotel/lusongyuanhotel

Tel: (10) 6404 0436

Address: No.22 Banchang Lane, Kuanjie Street, Dongcheng District

Price during Olympics: US\$330~380

Bamboo Garden Hotel 竹園

The Bamboo Garden Hotel is a classical Chinese courtyard-style structure in a quiet lane west of the Drum Tower in Beijing, a few steps from Shichahai scenic area. It was the private residence of Sheng Xuanhuai, the postal department minister in the late Qing Dynasty and it was also said to be the garden of Li Lianying, the imperial eunuch. The halls and pavilions in the building are linked by long corridors, with a tranquil and elegant surrounding of bamboo groves, rockeries and fountains. Its high walls separate this house from the world outside, creating a life of tranquillity. Still, it is close to the bustling Bell and Drum Tower and Houhai Park.

Bamboo Garden Hotel ...

Website: www.bbgh.com.cn **Tel:** (10) 5852 0088

Address: No.24, Xiaoshiqiao, Jiugulou Street, Xicheng District

Price during Olympics: standard room: 3,000 yuan; deluxe suite: 5,600 yuan; VIP suite: 8,800 yuan



Haoyuan Hotel 好園

It was the private residence of Li Lianying, the imperial eunuch in the Qing Dynasty and now belongs to the All-China Women's Federation. The inscription 'Hao Yuan' (meaning Ladies' Garden) on the archway of the hotel is written by Deng Yingchao, wife of the late premier Zhou Enlai. It has hosted many celebrities such as the late Hong Kong Governor Sir David Wilson. Haoyuan Hotel is known for its tranquil environment. Relaxing in the courtyard of beautiful plants after a day of sightseeing, that's what people love about a quadrangle compound.

Haoyuan Hotel ...

Website: www.haoyuanhotel.com **Tel:** (10) 6512 5557

Address: No.53 Shijia Hutong, Dengshi Dongkou of Dongcheng District

Price during Olympics: standard room 3,800 yuan; deluxe room: 4,650 yuan; medium deluxe suite 5,400 yuan; large deluxe suite: 6,900 yuan

4. Chain Hotels — Book It Fast

Most tourists to Beijing stay in chain hotels. On one hand there are plenty of choices but as the Olympics are coming, it is necessary to decide in advance which hotel you would choose.

Motel 168 莫泰連鎖酒店

Motel 168 is a national chain hotel like Home Inns and Super 8. There are five Motel 168 in Beijing, located separately at Zhongguancun in Haidian District, Anzhenqiao in Chaoyang District, Wangfujing in Dongcheng District (Motel 268), Xili in Xuanwu District, and You'anmen in Fengtai District. Motel 168 at Wangfujing in Dongcheng District has the best location. Motel 168 has business rooms, executive rooms, king-size rooms and family rooms. They are all equipped with TV, bathroom and have access to internet. It's better to reserve in advance. Motel 168 only receives on-line bookings ten days in advance, so it is advised to call the hotel beforehand.

Motel 168 ...

Website: www.motel168.com

National Reservation Call Centre: (10) 1010 2020

Beijing Reservation Call Centre: (10) 5167 1666

Price during Olympics: 1,380 yuan



Super 8 Hotel 速8經濟酒店

Super 8 Hotel at Xueyuan Road, Beijing has signed up with The Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) to be the Official Reception Hotel for the 2008 Olympic Games. Meanwhile, it is a member of the senior service executive team for Olympic village, the only budget hotel among the twelve members, designated by the Olympic Committee of Beijing Tourism Bureau, to provide management and service for the Olympic village.

Super 8 Hotel provides a special on-line booking service during the Olympic Games. The two hotels that are closest to Olympic venues are located at Beijing Olympic Village and Beijing Olympic Stadium. It is recommended to check the different charges and thus select the best one for you.

It should be noted that payment for your accommodation should be made within 7 days after the confirmation in order to confirm reservations during the Olympic Games. The rate for reservation is only valid in the month of booking and will increase with the coming of the big event. So, the earlier the better.



Super 8 Hotel

Website: www.super8.com.cn **Hotline:** 400 603 8888

Address: No.53 Shijia Hutong, Dengshi Dongkou of Dongcheng District

Price during Olympics: twin room: 1,408 yuan; standard room: 1,888 yuan. Hotels in other districts are cheaper: a standard room in Xuanwu District is 1,358 yuan and a deluxe suite at Hepingli costs only 1,288 yuan



Home Inns 如家酒店

Home Inns provides special on-line reservation for the Beijing Olympics. All of the properties of Home Inns around the Beijing Olympic venues are marked on a map of Beijing City. It's easy to find out the room price and distance from the hotel to Olympic venues. According to its website, the three Home Inns at Beijing Olympic village, Anzhen and Asian Games Village in Chaoyang District are the closest to Beijing Olympic Stadium and The National Aquatics Centre. The normal price is about 200 yuan. Home Inns at Beijing Olympic village and Anzhen are fully booked, but there are still many other Home Inns in Beijing. The price varies a lot. For instance, during the Olympics, the on-line rate for a standard twin room in some of the Home Inns in Xicheng and Haidian District is only 959 yuan. Further out in Fengtai District prices are about 719 yuan. And as the transportation is convenient, you don't have to stay near the Olympic venues.

Home Inns at Changping Gymnasium also has a special discount order at present, which costs 288 yuan / room. Call or visit its website for more information on other special offers and club member discounts in Beijing hotels. Each person can only book a special guestroom for 2 nights which costs 288 yuan / night. The rooms are limited.

Home Inns

Website: www.homeinns.com

Tel: (10) 400 820 3333 or 800 820 3333

Price during Olympics: twin room in Beijing Olympic Village 959~1,999 yuan; twin room in other districts 719~959 yuan; Changping Gymnasium 288 yuan

5. Hostels of Universities — Feel the Olympic Spirit

Besides the chain hotels and quadrangle inns, hostels of universities in Beijing receive foreign visitors as well. Although the condition is not as high a standard as star-rated hotels, the tranquil and safe campus does make an attractive choice. What's more, some Olympic venues are situated on campus, so you can feel the spirit of the Olympics close at hand.

Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics Gymnasium 北航培训中心

The gymnasium is located in BUAA (Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics), Xueyuan Road, Haidian District, where the event of weight-lifting will be held. During the Olympic Games, the training centre of BUAA will provide rooms in large variety. There is a restaurant and internet service. Reservations have already begun at a fixed price. If it turns out to be more expensive than that of the hotels, adjustment will be made.

BUAA

Website: www.buaa.edu.cn Tel: (10) 8231 7925

Address: No.37, Xueyuan Road, Haidian District

Price during Olympics: basic and deluxe single rooms: 1,000 yuan and 1,500 yuan respectively, standard rooms and business rooms: 1,800 yuan



Other events to be held on campus include the table tennis event in Peking University Gymnasium, wrestling in China Agricultural University Gymnasium, volleyball games in Beijing Institute of Technology Gymnasium and events of badminton and rhythmic gymnastics in Beijing University of Technology. But it is subject to the school authorities to decide whether their guesthouses will be open for visitors. So far, the hostels of Beijing Science and Technology University are fully booked. Peking University and Beijing Institute of Technology haven't given any information. The

student ID of Qinghua University or a reference letter is required to book in the hostel of Qinghua University. A standard room costs 1,350 yuan and 3-bed-room 1,455 yuan. The price of a standard room in Beijing Foreign Language University is 1,800 yuan (the price is not yet fixed for reservation). A standard room in Beijing University of Technology takes 1,000 yuan.

Tel: (10) 6275 2218 (Peking University); (10) 6279 3001 (Qinghua University); (10) 8881 6907 (Beijing Foreign Language University); (10) 6891 1191 (Beijing Institute of Technology); (10) 6739 1599 (Beijing University of Technology)

6. Star-rated Hotel A Guarantee of Accommodation

So far, 120 hotels in Beijing totalling over 30,000 rooms, have been designated as official reception hotels for the Olympic Games: 38 five-star hotels, 45 four-star hotels and 22 star-level hotels and 15 other hotels. The average price for a standard room is 2,799 yuan / room / night in five-star hotels, 2,155 yuan / room / night in four-star hotels, 1,466 yuan / room / night in three-star hotels, and 980 yuan / room / night in two-star hotels. For a list of the contract hotels, <http://www.beijing2008.cn/78/17/column211671778.shtml>

Some of the five-star hotels include:

Hotel Nikko New Century Beijing

Tel: (10) 6849 2001

Kempinski Hotels

Tel: (10) 6465 3388

Beijing Xiyuan Hotel


Tel: (10) 6831 3388

Grand Hyatt Beijing

Tel: (10) 8518 1234



7. Stay in Tianjin City while Visiting Beijing

Visitors can also stay in Tianjin, and then take the Jing-Jin Intercity Express Train to Beijing for the Olympic Games. This is a new choice for travellers. Jing-Jin Intercity Railway Transportation Project, linking Beijing and Tianjin, will be open for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. It is the first high-standard express passenger railway in China with an estimated top speed of 350 km / hour. The line stretches for about 115 km. It is planned to be in use before the Olympics, shortening the travelling time between Beijing to Tianjin to only half an hour. A train will leave every 5 minutes. The ticket fee is set between 60~80 yuan. As for accommodation, there are over 112 star-level hotels in Tianjin. 

Translated by Huang He

Some of the five-star hotels in Tianjin City include:

Teda International Club, Tianjin

Tel: (22) 5869 5555

Teda International Hotel & Club

Tel: (22) 2532 6000

Tian Bao International Hotel

Tel: (22) 2576 1588

Renaissance Tian Jin Teda Hotel

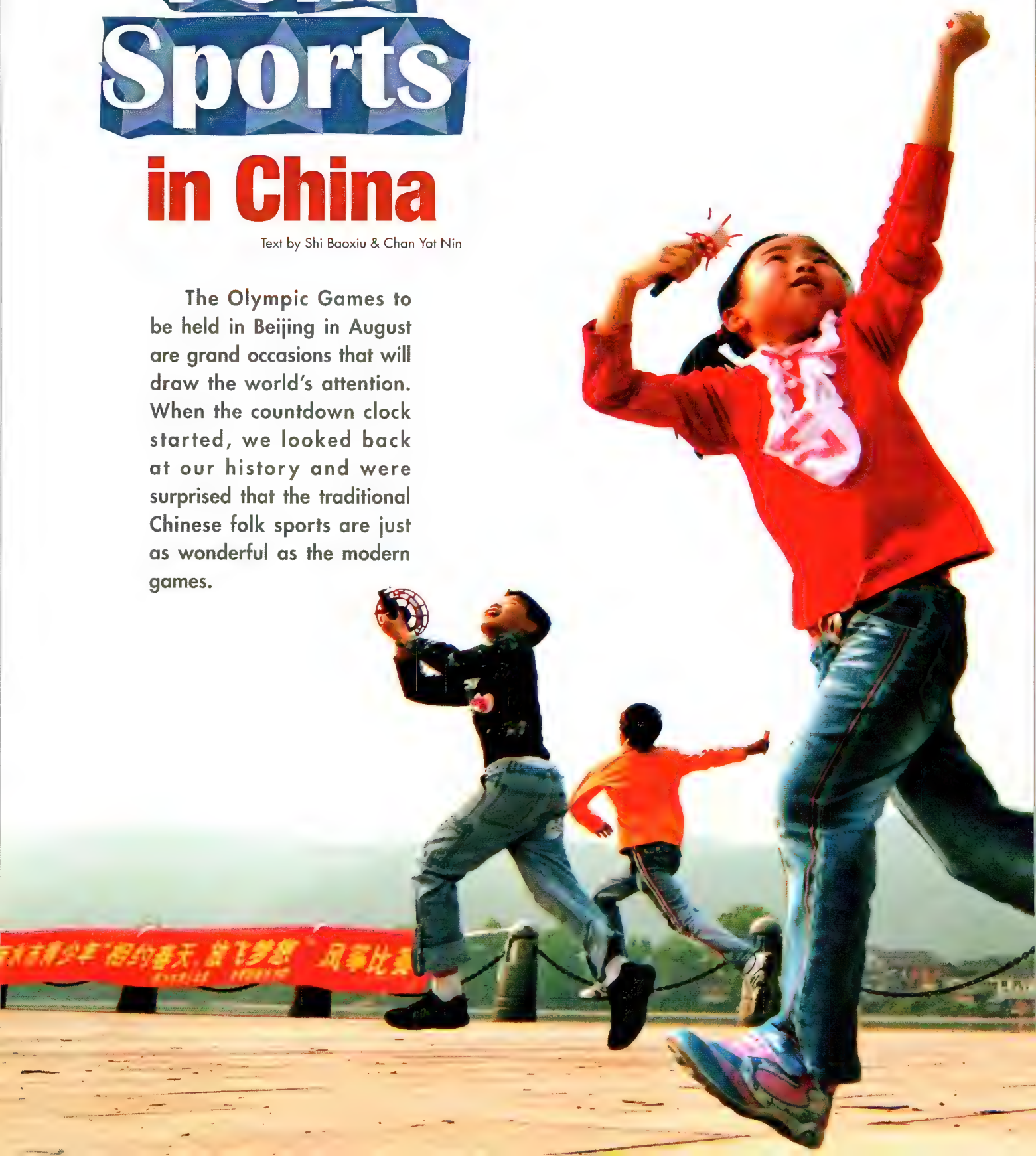
Tel: (22) 6621 8888

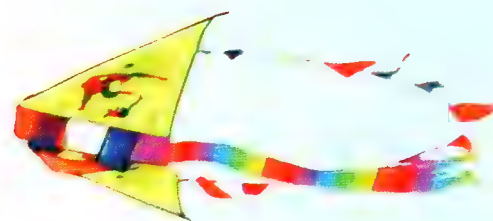


Folk Sports in China

Text by Shi Baoxiu & Chan Yat Nin

The Olympic Games to be held in Beijing in August are grand occasions that will draw the world's attention. When the countdown clock started, we looked back at our history and were surprised that the traditional Chinese folk sports are just as wonderful as the modern games.





Chinese folk sports, which are simple and easy to play, are closely linked with the seasons and peoples' daily lives. They derive mostly from the games or activities held at traditional festivals, rituals, fairs and sacrificial ceremonies of different rural tribes. Detailed descriptions of these sports, such as wrestling, ball games and climbing, can be easily found in the ancient Greek epic, Homer and some Chinese historical novels.

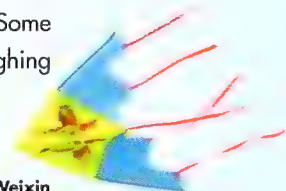
However, these healthy, entertaining traditional sports have given way to modern commercial life. Confucius once stood on the tall bank of a river sighing about good things that disappear with time. Some folk sports that once thrived in the past are on the verge of extinction but we shouldn't stand idle, sighing like Confucius. We must collect and preserve them long before they extinguish.

Kite Flying

Kite flying is a very healthy activity loved by all Chinese. Chinese kites are greatly varied and there are many ways to fly them. Traditional kites are mostly made of bamboo and paper. People draw special patterns on the paper, among which opera figures, opera masks and auspicious animals are the most commonly seen.

by Fu Weixin

Chinese kites from south China enjoy the name of 'Zhi Yao (paper sparrow hawk)' as they look like sparrow hawks and can be controlled to make various flying movements. Those from the north are called 'Feng Zheng (wind zither)' because northern Chinese like to put wind bells on the kites. When they fly high, the wind bells make a pleasant sound, just like the traditional Chinese zither.





The Bun Scrambling Competition at the Bun Festival

by Chan Yat Nin

The eighth day of the fourth month of the lunar calendar sees the Bun Festival in Cheung Chau of Hong Kong. This custom starting from the mid-Qing Dynasty (1644 — 1911) is practiced by the locals as a sacrificial ceremony to thank the god's blessing and to wish the deceased rest in peace. The busiest part of this festival is the bun scrambling activity. People pile buns (a symbol of happiness

and longevity) into a 10-metre-odd 'tower'. When the whistle goes, all the strong men chosen from every village run to grab the buns immediately, then they'll share the buns with their villagers.

Today the bun scrambling activity has become an intense competition. The participants need to grab buns in a fixed amount of time. The person with the highest score wins.



Northern Shaanxi Waist Drum Dancing

by Ma Yiu Chun

The typical farmers' dancing is wild, rhythmic and needs special agility and energy. The northern Shaanxi waist drum dancing is one of their styles. Compared to other types of drum dancing, it is more dynamic and athletic. As the waist drum is rather small, this dance can be performed anywhere. The waist drum also resembles the flat drum of southern Yan'an although the former has longer drum sticks and slightly different moves.

Horizontal Bar

by Wu Weifeng

The rural children in Lishui of Zhejiang Province perform pull-ups on a horizontal bar. Sometimes they even play or exercise on the bamboo sticks used by their mothers to dry clothes or on the wooden sticks used by their fathers to dry grain. Tree branches, door beams and bridge railings have also become their sports facilities. As the farm children often climb up and down on these 'horizontal bars', they are known to have big arms and strong muscles.





Diabolo (Above)

by Ma Xiangqun

Diabolo, a game that needs skill, is one of China's major morning exercises. The traditional diabolos, made of bamboo, are divided into two kinds: single-wheeled and double-wheeled. The wheels have small holes inside, which make a buzzing sound when the wheels are turning at a high speed.

The person in the picture plays seven diabolos altogether, which is extremely rare.



(Below)

by Fu Chunrong

This huge diabolo is about half metre in diameter and weighs about 4.5 kg. In Beijing Chaoyang Park, a huge diabolo with a diameter of 1.2 metres and weighing more than 20 kg was once played by several people in turn.



Spinning Top

Spinning top, also called 'beating monkey' in northwest China, is a traditional folk game with a long history. The earliest clay spinning tops were unearthed from the Yangshao Cultural Site. The cone-shaped spinning tops can be made of clay, wood, bamboo or stone, but mostly stone. The tip of the spinning top is embedded with an iron nail or bead to maintain its durability. When playing one should wind string around it and then pull out the string with a lot of force to make it spin on the ground. Then you continue to whip it to keep it spinning. A carefully made top

by Liu Zidian

can spin for two to five minutes with a few hard lashes.

There are a few ways to play with the top. One is to whip it and keep it upright for a long time; two is to drive one's own top to knock down an opponent's; three is to cast the top to hit the opponent's spinning top; if it is aimed correctly and one's top keeps spinning, you win, if not the other person takes a turn to hit.

The picture shows the first way to play with the top. This huge top called 'the king of tops' takes a lot of strength and two whips to play with.



Tug of War on the Water

by Lin Ximing

The tug of war on the water is originated from the see-saw game between warships in ancient times. During the race, the sterns of two boats are connected by a rope. The shipmen of each boat row their boat in an opposite direction. The rules for this game are the same as the tug of war on land.



Tug of War by the Neck (Above)

by Shi Baoxiu

This is a competition of strength among the Uyghur people in Xinjiang, resembling a tug of war. Unlike the normal tug of war, this game uses participants' necks to pull the rope.

(Below)

by Liu Zhenming

The Dawoer people in Xinjiang also like the tug of war by neck. Differing from the Uyghur game, the Dawoer people exert strength towards the back, with their feet pushing each other.





Rope Skipping

by Wu Weifeng

Rope skipping has been popular for over 1,000 years. Early in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 — 589), rope skipping was widely practiced to prevent sickness and prolong life. There are no special requirements of the location needed to skip rope. The number of players can be one, two or more.

The ox has become the children's playmate for rope skipping.

Kicking Shuttlecocks

by Su Dong

Early in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. — 220 A.D.), kicking shuttlecocks started to become popular among Chinese people. Some unearthed brick carvings of the Han Dynasty reveal the image of people kicking shuttlecocks. Traditional shuttlecock games pick the winner by the number of kicks that one completes at one time without pause. There are other techniques of playing with shuttlecocks, for example, front and back kicks and with the chest, head or shoulders. The number of players can be two or more.

Kicking shuttlecocks was originally a children's game, but now has become popular among the middle-aged and the elderly.



Rolling the Iron Hoop

by Song Shuguang

This is one of the oldest children's games in China. This game has a direct connection with people's wooden buckets. Unlike today's hula hoop that is specially made as a toy, in the past the hoops were taken from broken buckets and given to children to play with. In this picture, urban children are playing with plastic hula hoops as the traditional wooden buckets have long gone.

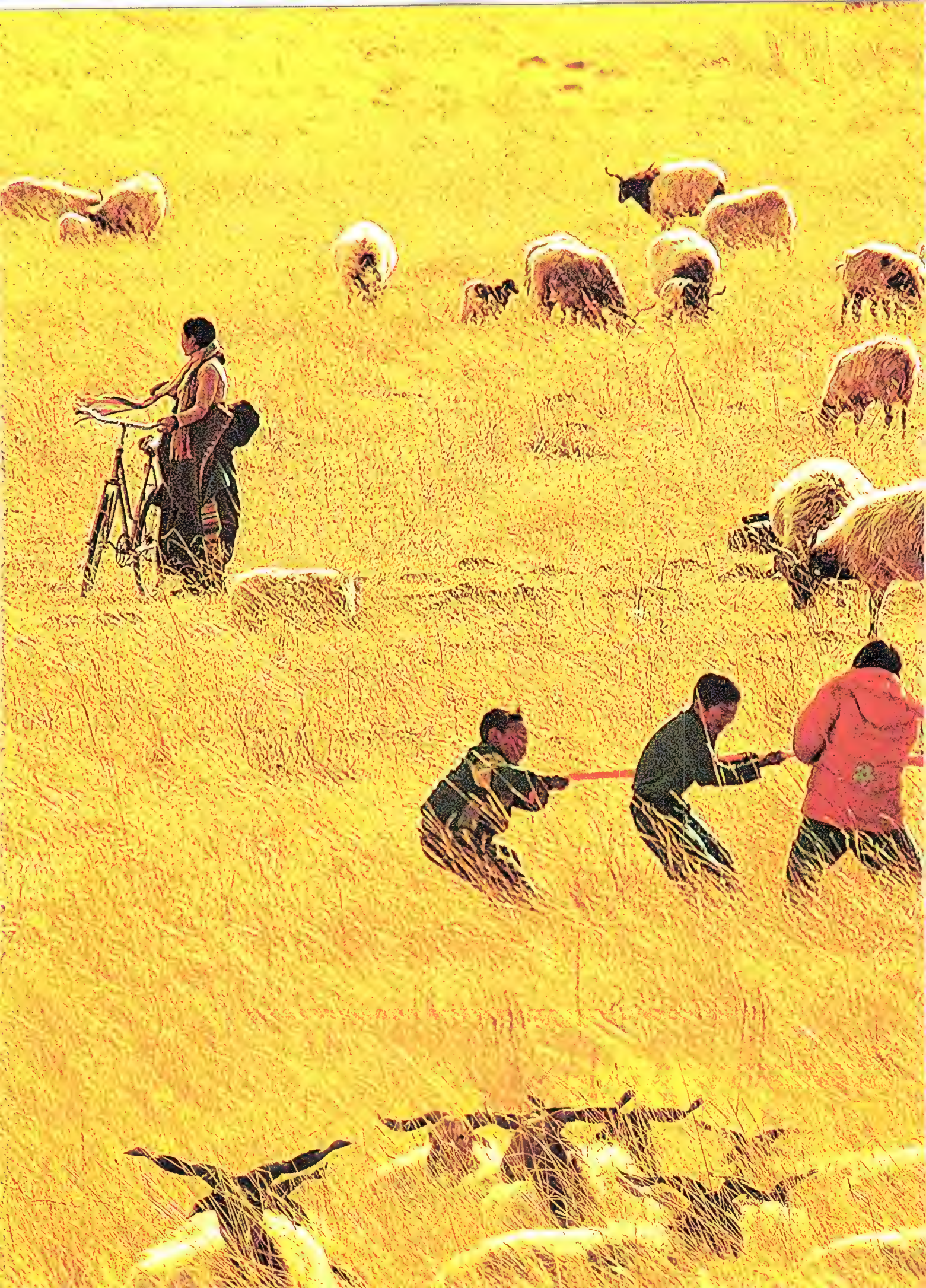


Chinese Jump Rope

by Ye Gaoxing

Chinese jump rope is a very popular sport among children, especially girls. They stretch the elastic rubber band at a certain height for various

jumping games. With the increase of its height, the game increases in difficulty. In the end, players may have to hold the rubber bands over their heads.





Tug of War

by Wang Ping

Tug of war, a popular sports event among Chinese, can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (475 B.C. — 221 B.C.). It is recorded in historical documents that originally a towline with a hook attached to one end was used to pull warships. This kind of towline was called a 'drag hook'. This sport reached its heyday during the Tang Dynasty (618 — 907). Emperor Xuanzong (685 — 762) of the Tang Dynasty sometimes organised large-scale tugs of war involving nearly 1,000 people.

Tug of war remains one of the most popular group sports in China today.

Walking on Burning Cans

by Chan Yat Nin

The Yao people in Jinxiu County of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region walk on burning cans with their bare feet; surprisingly, their feet are impervious to the fire. The Yao people in Guangdong and Guangxi and the Miao people in Guizhou all have this unique skill. Maybe this has something to do with their habit of walking barefoot.





Horizontal Shoulder Bar

by Ye Gaoxing

When a wooden stick is placed between two people's shoulders, it becomes a simple mobile horizontal bar. Then activities on the bar can begin. The player either swings or does pull-ups. This not only entertains the player but also trains the people who carry the bar.



Hula Hoop Race

by Zheng Jianhua

The hula hoop is a recognised exercise which needs special flexibility and skill. To race while whirling it around the waist is much harder than the normal game. If the hoop falls on the ground, the competitor has to pick it up and whirl it again before he continues running. The person who arrives at the finish line first wins the race.



Qintong Boat Race

by Wu Jiaxiang

The Qintong boat race in Taizhou of Jiangsu Province is held during the Pure Brightness Day. It is said that during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127 – 1279), Yue Fei (1103 – 1142, a famous general) led his troops to fight against the Jin troops on the Lake of Qin. Later, people went there on a boat to hold a memorial ceremony for the officials and soldiers who died in the battle. This custom has gradually transformed into a sport.

Homemade Bowling

by Tong Jianguo

A bowling lane made by children themselves in Songyang County of Zhejiang Province uses a simple wooden track as the course, soft drink bottles as the pins and a basketball as the bowling ball.

Grassland Basketball

by Ma Jie

At the summer sports meeting on the Gannan (Southern Gansu Province) Grassland, there is a special basketball game played by Tibetan lamas. The court is randomly selected on the grassland. Then people draw a line in the middle of the court and set up simple basketball stands. After that, let the game begin!



Pumpkin-moving Race

by Zhou Lijun

At the farmers' sports meeting in Jiangkou County of Guizhou Province, there is a running race in which participants carry some objects from daily-life, such as pumpkins. Sometimes the object is replaced with roosters, baskets, even children or the participant's spouse. The game is also sometimes played by couples carrying children. All in all, no matter what form it is in, as long as it can relax people and bring happiness to their life, people love it.





Basketball on Stilts

by Zhang Xianglin

After modern sports were introduced into China, they were often modified accordingly. Stilts certainly add difficulty to the game of basketball, but they also make it more interesting!



Couples' Ball Race

by Zhao Peisen

A funny and touching race. One couple forms a team. They put a ball between their heads and they have to run to the end point without dropping the ball. Any team that drops the ball on the way will be kicked out of the game.



Horse Fight

by Ran Yujie

A traditional activity, popular among the Miao and Yao people in Guizhou and Guangxi. It is said that this game originated 500 years ago from the tradition of choosing a bridegroom through horse fighting. Whenever two men fought over one woman, the king of the Miao people would organise a horse fight to decide who would be the bridegroom. The one whose horse won could marry the woman he loved. Later, this tradition developed into an entertainment activity held during festivals. At each run, two stallions fight with each other. The loser leaves while the winner stays and continues to fight. The one that wins in the end is the champion.

Bullfight

by Chan Yat Nin

In China, the Hui people's bullfight is a contest between bulls and men. It is not as bloody as when the bulls are stabbed by swords or people are injured by sharp horns, but the performer pins the bull down with amazing strength and skill.






Bullfighting

by **Zhang Jinneng**

Chinese-style bullfighting only involves bulls. They fight until one gives up and so the other one wins. This game is a traditional activity loved by the southwestern Chinese minority groups, including Miao, Dong, Shui and Yi.

The picture shows the bullfighting competition at the Torch Festival of the Yi people on the Daliang Mountain in Sichuan Province. 

Translated by Nicole Ouyang

Hot Sea in Sanya

Photos & Article by Kay Cheng

Hainan Island, at the end of the sea and sky metaphorically, was once a bitter place for exiled literati. But now time has changed, it is the only tropical province in China and the southernmost. Sanya at its bottom end, offers sunshine, beaches, hot springs, rain forest and ancient relics. Sanya is truly an international vacation paradise.

To have a vacation that embraces sunshine, beach and blue skies, Thailand, Indonesia and other Southeast countries instantly come to mind. But when you count the number of days you can take and your budget, you'll probably begin to frown. Wait a second though — now you have a new option. Blue seas, sunshine, beaches and coconut trees can all be found on Hainan Island, China. It takes just one and a half hours by air from Hong Kong to Sanya and soon you'll be in a seaside paradise with the same tropical heat and beaches as the better known destinations.

Sanya, formerly a small fishing port, received 150,000 Russians, 140,000 Koreans and numerous other foreign and domestic tourists last year. Sanya has hosted the Miss World Final for four consecutive years from 2003. Why do people from home and abroad flock to this retreat in the tropical south? They go for the balmy weather and the sea.

The dusk of Wuzhizhou Island. (by Chan Yat Nin)

Where to Stay?

It's not difficult to find a place to stay overnight in Sanya. You are offered a full spectrum of accommodation — resorts, hotels, guest houses, hostels, family homes of local residents — all over the city. Money-wise, you have a range of choices from dozens of yuan per bed to well over 1,000 yuan per room for one night in Dadonghai Bay, a popular beach near the downtown area. As Dadonghai Bay and Xiaodonghai Bay are public beaches, you need to pay 10~20 yuan for a locker and shower. Some surrounding hotels sell discounted tickets for water activities. Staying near the beaches saves you the trouble of travelling.

Downtown Sanya is the traffic hub that leads conveniently to destinations in all directions. For that reason, its room rates are not much cheaper than that in Dadonghai Bay. Besides, downtown Sanya is only 15 to 20 minutes away from the airport by car. To catch an early flight, staying downtown makes life easier.

The recently popular family hostels are found densely in Haipo of Sanya Bay. A private apartment with one room and one lounge or with multiple rooms is offered at 500 yuan per night, which is a moderate price. You can search for room data and make a reservation online.

Gloria Hotel Sanya in Hainan

Location: Yalong Bay

Compared with other five-star hotels, this is moderately priced and attracts extensive favour. It is often fully booked. The water therapy garden by the beach provides such services as aromatherapy, aroma therapeutic massage, skin care and seaweed skin firming. The hotel also provides an 18-hole golf course, beach bar, lighted tennis court, archery range and other outdoor activities.

Rate: Room with a golf course view, 1,688 yuan / night



Yalong Bay Mangrove Tree Resort

Location: Yalong Bay

The decor of the resort elicits a heavy tropical theme. The delicate furnishings were largely imported from Thailand. The Thai-style SPA zone is equipped with an artificial waterfall for flat-lying whole-body water therapy, which is the only facility of this kind in Yalong Bay.

Rate: Room with a sweeping sea view, 1,680 yuan / night

Accommodation



Sanya Blue Sky International Youth Hostel

Location: Dadonghai Bay

The hostel is economical and just 10 minutes away from the sea by foot. It is the best choice for young foreigners and backpackers.

Rate: Double room, 120 yuan / night

Address: No. 1, Lanhai Lane, Haiyun Road, Dadonghai Bay, Sanya

Tel.: (898)8818 2320

Nantian Hot Spring Resort

Location: Haitangwan Town

The resort features the unique multi-mineral hot springs. Nearly 50 hot springs in the open air maintain the water temperature of 37°C year-round. A hot, smoky bath brings soothing comfort. The hotel is a favourite of Russian and Korean tourists.

Rate: Deluxe room with a paddy field view, 1,180 yuan / night





Hilton Sanya Resort & Spa

architectural style of the local Li-Miao nationality, it presents a feel typical of Hainan that I cannot find in Southeast Asian countries.

The hotel was appraised in 2007 to be a five-star hotel. The inner decor of the hotel and the rooms is brand new. The service is satisfactory.

It takes you a few minutes to reach the beach from the hotel. Having changed into a bathing suit and thrown away all your worries, you can embrace the waves in no time. Before you reach the 400-metre private beach, your feet are already stepping on fine soft sand. The path from the swimming pool to the outdoor facilities on the beach is covered with natural powdery white sand. Sunbathing by the swimming pool, sleeping in a hammock in the sea breeze, enjoying a spa under a thatch umbrella you can relax in different ways. The five swimming pools put together measure 100 metres in length. They are surrounded in fine sand and look like a small beach. They provide the same fun and feel of swimming on the beach to swimming illiterates like me.

The round double-person tub in the room is the favourite private niche for couple. With a little aromatic bath salt in the tub, ones get fully soaked, appreciating the grand seascape outside while chatting the mesmerising chat just for lovers. The night was too short! The staff of the hotel reminded me of the free water massage pool and sauna in the spa zone. I hurried to try them, and discovered that the lakeside scenery there was astonishing. I also tried foot massage and hot stone massage, which were less expensive. In the double-person spa room, an independent sauna room, outdoors bathing pool and massage bed were available.

Yalong Bay in the east of Sanya has densely lined-up five-star hotels of various styles — Balinese, Thai, Hawaiian, etc — along the beach. Each hotel has access to the beach, which is just a few hundred metres away. The long beach is cut up into sections by the waterfront hotels. If you pick an expensive five-star hotel in the suburb, you may as well spend a little more to book a room with a sea view in a five-star hotel with private beach. This is a great way to have a taste of what the rich enjoy or to rekindle lost romance.

Location: Yalong Bay
Rate: Bay Room Deluxe 2,580 yuan / night

Hilton Sanya Resort & Spa

I chose Hilton Sanya Resort & Spa in Yalong Bay. Featuring the





If there were a place in Sanya that can combine the advantages of short distance to the airport and downtown as well as quiet seascape, it would be Haipo in Sanya Bay. It is an area for new development extended from the 'Coconut Dream Corridor' downtown. In addition to many brand new seaview residential buildings and cottages, it has a large variety of hotels lined up one by one in the same way as Yalong Bay. Unlike those in Yalong Bay though, the hotels here are separated from the beach by Sanya Bay Road. For that reason the hotels in Sanya Bay are not as popular as those in Yalong Bay. Kempinski Resort & Spa Sanya is the only exception that is adjacent to a section of private beach. With such an exceptional advantage, the rooms are quite expensive.

Kempinski Hotel Sanya

My flight home was changed to 8 am. Luckily I stayed at Kempinski Hotel Sanya, only 10 to 15 minutes away from the airport by car. Frankly, after just two days in the hotel, I did not feel like leaving it. A full line of top facilities in the hotel provided all sorts of fun.

The hotel adopts European management. It reflects a special artistic quality and elegant style in both facilities and decor. By 'European', I do not mean something superficial. You can have a sip of the freshly brewed German beer at Paulaner Brauhaus. That is a solid taste of European style. The bar offers guests a glimpse of how beer is freshly brewed in-house by a Paulaner brewer from Munich. For the Paulaner beer alone you have a good reason to choose Kempinski.

In addition to the private beach, the hotel provides a few swimming pools. The best is the one with slides, the only one of its kind in Sanya. Lying

on the beach-chair by the swimming pool, I felt happy enough to watch children rushing off the slides into the pool. The children's artificial beach was one of my favourite hangouts. It was covered with natural fine sand that would not scratch the soft skin of them. By squeezing my feet into the sand, I felt a click from the soles of the feet upwards. The natural fine sand might offer skin care too. Who knows?

Talking about beauty services and skin care, you should not miss Angsana SPA managed by Banyan Tree. You can check out the water therapy cottage equipped with massage and water therapeutic facilities, pampering yourself in a totally exclusive space. Yet within a few steps you can reach the Spa Area by the outdoor lakes. You can surrender yourself to a different setting for a different mood.

Location: Sanya Bay
Rate: Deluxe 1,400 yuan / night



Fun

Swimming in Choices

Sanya is encompassed by long coastline on three sides. You can swim, sunbathe and enjoy water activities on Wuzhizhou Island, Yalong Bay, East Island, Dadonghai Bay, Lingshenghai Bay, West Island from east to west. With so many choices, you can pick a great swimming site at a great price.

Natural, Energetic Wuzhizhou Island

I believe Wuzhizhou Island has the best water quality that I could catch a beautiful tiny fish in the shallow puddles on the beach and take a picture of my catch. Many other amateur fishermen joined me on the beach, but still it was not crowded at all. Water activities like water bicycles, flying parafoils, snorkelling and scuba diving are components of different packages. One package contains a number of choices. The island has a natural coral reef. You can have a stroll on the beach or in the forest or there is plenty to do even you are not interested in water activities.

The only problem with Wuzhizhou Island is that it is not owned by direct public bus. You can take the bus to Lingshenghai and get off at the beach road to the island, still 4.8 km away from the pier. You may hire a taxi or motorcycle taxi as some hotels and travel agencies provide different package service to Wuzhizhou Island (entrance, boat transport and shuttle bus included), which may be more convenient and economical.

Private Space in Yalong Bay

Apart from the section at No. 1 Square, other parts of the beach are divided into sections by the wooden fence. The beach is known for its clear

water, fine white sand and few tourists. Managed by the locals, the whole beach looks quiet and clean. There is a convenient bus service to Yalong Bay from downtown Sanya. However, if you do not stay in the resorts and hotels there, you are not advised to go there. No. 1 Square, Seashell Gallery and Butterfly Valley in Yalong Bay area are not everyone's cup of tea. The facilities at these sites are mediocre. There are limited water activities on the beach. If you go for water sports, this is not the best place for you.

Foreign Tourists Throng to Dadonghai Bay

Dadonghai Bay and adjacent Xidonghai Bay are public beaches. A few companies provide some water activities. Dadonghai Bay leads to a fine green. There are a large number of foreign tourists, mostly Russians, in the area. Many have been making the area have become a popular place of Sanya.

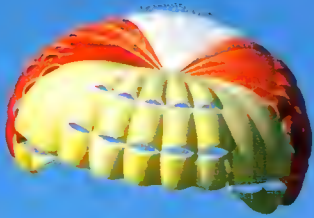
West Island

In terms of natural attractions, West Island and Wuzhizhou Island are similar. You can choose either as a vacation. The transportation to West Island is more convenient than that to Wuzhizhou Island. However, West Island's sand is coarse, but its coral reef is good for snorkelling. It is advised that you make your choice based on your personal needs.



Crazy fun watersports. (by Chen Yan Niao)

Flying parafoils is my favorite. (by Huang Yantong)



Charming Scenery in Nanshan

In addition to the pleasures of the sea on your itinerary, Nanshan is a stop worth a one-day visit. Among a variety of subtropical seaside resorts, Nanshan and Cape Tianyahaijiao resonate with Chinese culture and tradition. They bring a special charm to Sanya, lifting the city from its image as the 'Hawaii of China' to a unique city with its own special qualities.

Buddhist-themed Nanshan Cultural Scenic Zone and Taoist-themed Nanshan Dongtian Park are two adjacent scenic zones. As the Chinese compliment goes, 'I wish you a life as long as Nanshan'. Nanshan is famous in China for its 'village of longevity'. It has more than 100 elderly people aged over 100. Each year, many people visit Nanshan and pay homage to the Buddhist statues, praying for the welfare and health of their families.

Guanyin (or *Avalokitesvara*, *Bodhisattva* of Compassion) is worshipped in Nanshan Cultural Scenic Zone. In addition to the Guanyin statue made of gold, carnelian and diamond, a gigantic, pure-white statue of the three-faced, six-armed Guanyin, 108 metres in height, stands by the seaside. There is a saying that when Sanya suffered a long drought, the local government spent 40 million yuan to pump water into the city. After the huge Guanyin statue was erected, rain started to pour again.

It takes over three hours to tour the whole scenic zone. You need to queue to pray in front of the gods. It is suggested you

spend 20 yuan to take the electric cart, getting on or off anywhere you like.

Nanshan is famous for the longevity of its people and 1000-year and even 10,000-year-old trees. Nanshan Dongtian Park is a scenic zone with a Taoist theme. It emphasises the Taoist principles of 'combining heaven and people', and 'returning to nature'. It has 30,000 dracaena trees. The old dracaena trees are hollow inside the trunk, hence the nickname 'tree not for pillar'. However, over 2,000 of them are over 1,000 years old, and the oldest one is 10,000 years.

Many tourists rush to Nanshan by the earliest bus, hurry to finish two scenic zones, and take the last bus to leave at 18:20 on the same day. In fact, they can stay overnight in Nanshan, view the grandeur of sunrise, and also visit Cape Tianyahaijiao on the way home. Nanshan Cultural Scenic Zone provides some special treehouses by the seaside, perfect places to appreciate the seaview and the grand Guanyin statue. The nest-like treehouses were designed by Hawaiian treehouse expert David Greenberg, and built by a group of Hawaiians. In the evening, you can hear the rumbling of waves in the treehouses. It is an ideal hangout for romance or for a group party.



Scenery



Romantic Trip to Sanya

Cape Tianyahaijiao

Tianyahaijiao is a must-go site for all first-timers to Sanya. It consists of two huge rocks on the beach, one inscribed with 'Tianya' and the other with 'Haijiao'. Tourists vie to stand in front of the rocks to have their photos taken. Tracing the history of these rocks, it is found that modern people have romanticised the meaning of the name. In ancient times, Hainan Island was a savage and wild island far away from the capital. It was best known for housing exiled officials and criminals. Su Dongpo (1037 — 1101), a famous poet in the North Song Dynasty (960 — 1127), wrote a line 'North Sea and Hainan (south of the sea) lie apart at each end of the sky', when he was exiled to the island. The words speak volumes about the hardship of exile.

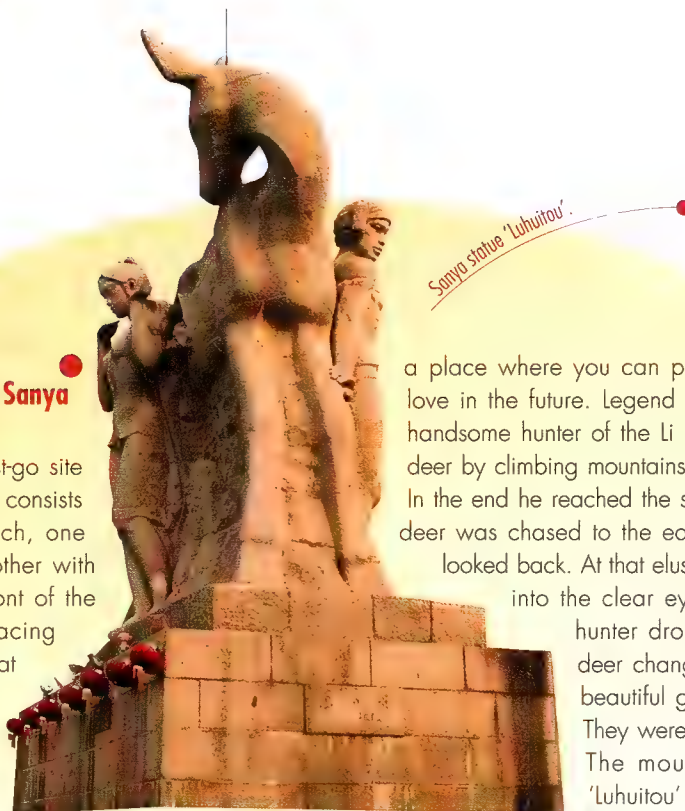
Luhuitou Park

The romance I sought was evident in Luhuitou (Deer Looks Back) Park in Dadonghai Bay. You can have a panoramic view of Sanya from the top of the mountain. In addition, it is

a place where you can pray for love in the future. Legend has it that a handsome hunter of the Li people traced a deer by climbing mountains and crossing rivers. In the end he reached the sea in the south. The deer was chased to the edge of the cliff, and looked back. At that elusive moment, looking into the clear eyes of the deer, the hunter dropped his bow. The deer changed suddenly into a beautiful girl of the Li people. They were married in the end. The mountain was named 'Luhuitou' after the legendary love story. A sculpture, the

highest one in the whole island, was erected. Sanya gained the name 'Deer City'. The old deer keeper asked me, why came alone? I smiled and said, I haven't found my Mr. Right yet. He then led me to the statue of Yuelao (the Chinese legendary match-maker who binds lovers with red threads) with lots of red ribbons. Pray, and your dreams will come true, he said. Hopefully, in a romantic and beautiful city like Sanya, a solo backpacker can also bring home some good luck.

Translated by Zhang Boli



Sanya statue 'Luhuitou'.

Sentience



Cape Tianyahaijiao is packed with tourists.



The Statue of Yuelao in Luhuitou Park.



Sanya City's panorama.

Bridge passage in downtown Sanya.



How to Get There

Transportation: There are one to two direct flights from Hong Kong to Sanya, and a lot more flights from morning to evening from Shenzhen. It is suggested to take a flight from Shenzhen for the many options. On a short vacation, a proper flight saves time. The whole trip takes 80 minutes.

An airport bus service to downtown (to Dadonghai Bay at 15 yuan) is available. Public buses go from Daxiaodongtian to Yalong Bay in a circular route, penetrating the city from west to east. Public buses fares range from 1-10 yuan based on distance. The service time is 06:00-19:20. Taxis charges 5 yuan for the first 2 km, and 2 yuan for every additional 2 km. For a trip longer than 20 km, it charges 1 yuan per km for the empty home trip. You can haggle with most taxis. However, it is best to know about the distance to your destination first. Tourists are most likely to have trouble with taxis to Yalong Bay. In the case of overcharging, rejection or metering problems, it is wise not to argue with the driver. You can write down the plate number, pay the fare and call the complaint hotline 12315 (nationwide) or 8827 6703.

Delicacies: The four principal courses of Hainan cuisine are Wenchang chicken, Dongshan mutton, Jiadi duck and Hele crab. To prepare an authentic Wenchang chicken, the chicken must be a well-bred species. It is raised traditionally with a special recipe. The bones taste soft, and the meat tender. You won't have the oily feel of other chickens. With seasoning, it is yummy! Dongshan goat is black-skinned. Its meat tastes rich, fresh, yet without the usual sheepy odour. Ways of cooking include braising, stewing and boiling. Jiadi duck features thin skin, soft bones and tender meat. The varieties of the course are chopped plain duck, salted duck and braised duck. Hele crab is famous for plentiful roe and thick meat. It is best to steam it.

In Shengli Road, in the area near Sanya Bus Terminal, there are lots of roadside restaurants that serve local delicacies. The duck and Dongshan mutton there are great.

Commodity Street is packed with Sichuan restaurants. Heping Street contains many evening snack-food shops. Their seafood barbecue is good and priced attractively.

Last but not least, seafood. Seafood restaurants abound in Coconut Dream Corridor and Dadonghai Bay. The most distinctive seafood experience is found in the fish-breeding raft restaurant near Hongsha Pier. You can have a seafood feast while watching the sunset. The seafood barbecue offered in some hotels and scenic zones is not bad. Though seafood is found everywhere, it is not cheaper than

that in Hong Kong. Comparison and haggling are useful. I was told that Chunyuan Seafood Square was the right place for seafood gourmets, and the price was decent.

Shopping: Specialty goods of Sanya include coconut products, shells and coconut shell handicrafts, Hainan-style T-shirts, cornelian, etc. They are offered generally in the scenic zones. Bargains are found at the stalls near No.1 Market in downtown Sanya.

Tickets for Scenic Zones and other Costs:

Wuzhizhou Island Resort Centre, 128 yuan (scenic zone, 33 yuan; boat, 95 yuan); electric cart (scenic zone, 40 yuan; whole island, 80 yuan); deluxe room with mountain view, 888 yuan /night
Nanshan Cultural Scenic Zone, 150 yuan; electric cart, 20 yuan; seaside treehouse for two persons, 580 yuan / night

Nanshan Dongtian Park, 58 yuan

Package ticket of Yalong Bay National Resort, 69 yuan (Central Square, 56 yuan; Butterfly Valley, 24 yuan)

Luhuitou Park, 30 yuan (slide cart, 40 yuan, the service time 09:00-19:20)

Cape Tianyahaijiao Scenic Zone, 65 yuan; electric cart 15 yuan (not recommended for its short distance)

West Island 100 yuan

Tip: Coconut Dream Corridor is 20 km in length. The only toilet is found near the Urban Utilities and Landscaping Bureau of Sanya at 0.5 yuan / person.

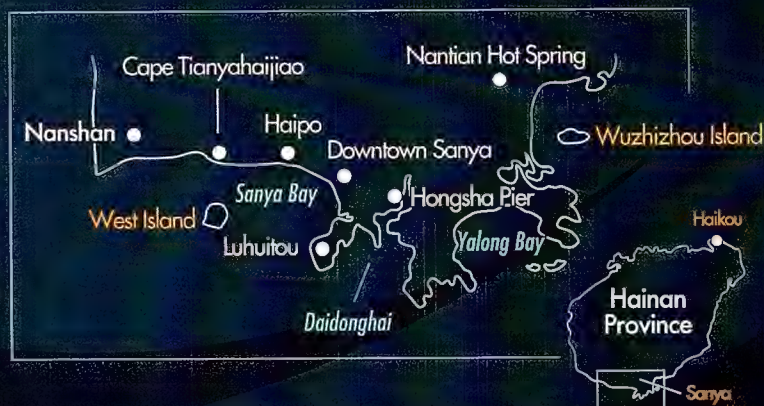
For details of water activities in different scenic zones and room rates, please refer to the official web site of Sanya tourism: www.sanyatour.com

Bars in Dadonghai.



Delicious seafood BBQ on Wuzhizhou Island

Cute monkey coconut sculpture.





The Keriya Tribe in Xinjiang

Photos & Article by Han Gang

In the depths of Taklimakan Desert in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, there is a stretch of oasis — Deryaboyi — along the downstream section of the Keriya River. The Keriya people, who have lived a nomadic life for generations, depend wholly on this ever-changing river. Unfortunately, the deterioration of environment has caused the diminishing of water quantity, and the river is gradually disappearing in an ocean of sand. The past and future of Keriya people is bound with the river, and so life is growing tougher for them. Will they vanish in the desert just like their river?

I joined a caravan in Yutian County instead of renting a Land Rover. The merchants were heading for Deryaboyi to trade with the Keriya people, exchanging flour and other daily necessities for sheepskin. We rode on the backs of camels under the blazing sun for five days. Although the journey was difficult, I still trusted that we would make it to

the oasis. We crossed the endless Gobi Desert and sand dunes and finally arrived there. That isolated place lies in the south of Deryaboyi County by the Keriya River.

Deryaboyi is the only place marked on the map of the 337,600 km square Taklimakan Desert. It lies in the depths of the desert along the

lower reaches of the Keriya River. A total of 1,290 villagers (from 263 families) reside there, raising sheep to make a living. They speak Uygur and believe in Islam. The land stretches over 1.1 million acres, with poplar and rose willow woods.

My guide Juma couldn't understand why I would travel here. He commented that the place was nothing but sand.

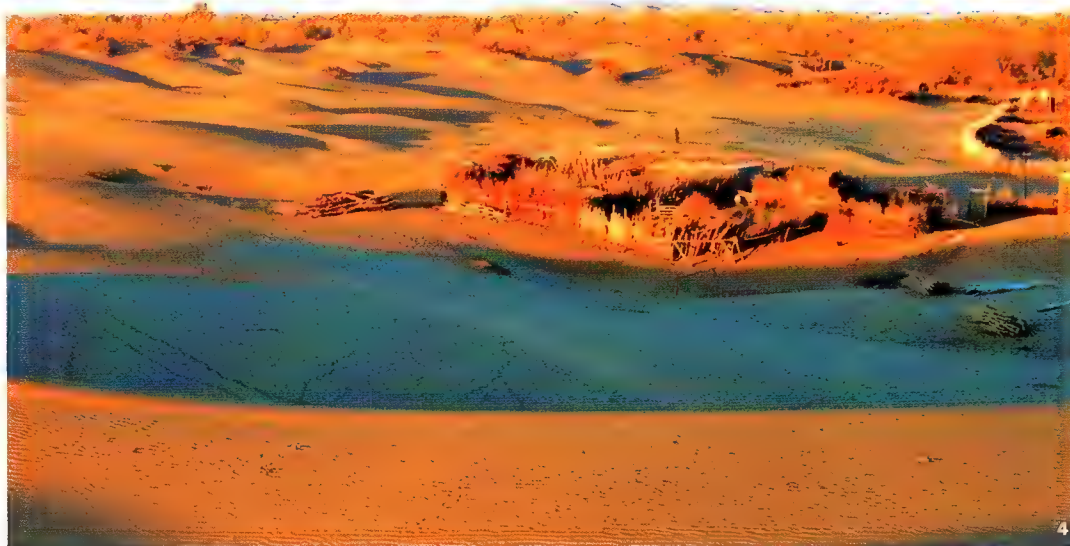
The wind blew heavily the day I arrived. Sand was everywhere in the air, and I could hardly open my eyes. At the Keriya River, I saw several cottages. The walls were woven with the branches of rose willow and poplar and daubed with mud outside. Thick layers of reeds were laid on the roof. The villagers used the bulky trunks of the poplar as doors. Only these weathered wooden huts stood here.

In the evening, I settled in a local family. The host was called Arsilan, the chief of the oasis, and his wife was called Paridam. They had two

children. 35-year-old Arsilan shook my hand warmly with his big and coarse hands. I gave him some Brick Tea and rock sugar as gifts.

A Nomadic Life along the Keriya River

Arsilan told me that his family had been living by the Keriya River since his grandfather. The history of Keriya people is passed down from generation to generation orally without written. All they learn about their origin is from their elderly. It is said that they are the descendants of Guge Dynasty (10th Century) in Tibet, who crossed Kunlun Mountains and settled at this oasis to escape from war. Another version about their origin is that they were the aborigines in this desert. The most legendary one is that they were from the mysterious Loulan Ancient City, which vanished in the desert 2,000 years ago. Wherever they came from, they have been living along the Keriya River ever since. It is the river that they care about most.



1. The mothers get-together in Keriya. Ladies do not take charge of the housework immediately after they get married. Instead, they help their mothers-in-law and learn homemaking skills until they have their first baby.

2. A newborn baby.

3. Pretty Keriya woman. Her eyes show passion for her homeland.

4. Keriya houses are built with the branches and trunks of poplars and rose willows. This isolated village is just like an island in an ocean of sand.

The grasslands near the river have nurtured their sheep and the poplar woods have provided shelter for them. Since water is crucial for their nomadic life, the Keriya people had to move when the river went dry or changed its course.

The water in the River is too muddy to drink, so part of Arsilan's daily work is to take care of the only well they have there. When he finished chopping firewood, he liked sitting against the wall of his house, smoking his pipe and staring at the tranquil desert in the distance. His wife Paridam did most of the housework like cooking and feeding sheep, while their children herded the sheep near the River during the day.

The two children brought the sheep back at dusk, enlivening the whole house with their bright laughter. The fire in the stove cast a soft light on our faces. Outside was the tranquil and starlit night. Their daughter, Gul, kept tipping my bag upside-down, scattering its contents on the floor. She had never seen a camera before. When I showed her how it worked and filmed her, she

was so scared to see her own face on the tiny screen and screamed at the top of her lungs. After a few days, I learned that there were 11 families at this pasture site, all making a living by tending sheep. They were shocked to see a strange face at the beginning, but they smiled after knowing the purpose of my visit. Though they had coarse skin and wrinkles carved deep into their faces due to the tough windy weather there, that couldn't hide the beauty and sincerity of their smiles. The Keriya people have no glorious history or splendid culture. All they have is perseverance and their *Kuran*. For ages, they have been guarding their sacred Keriya land.

Life for them is growing harder. The shepherds told me that the river was running dry. Originating from the Wustenger Mountain of the Kunlun Mountains, the Keriya River runs northwards into the Taklimakan Desert for almost 200 km. The annual average rainfall here is only 1.4 mm and evaporation is 300 mm. Nowadays, the worsening of the global environment has affected





the Keriya River. Grasslands are disappearing and the number of sheep is decreasing. The river only runs for 100 km before vanishing into the desert. The Keriya people know nothing about the environmental problems; they just endure the changes in the conditions. Arsilan said that other shepherds used to stop here, wishing to settle among them, but as this Allah-blessed oasis could support no more sheep, these strangers had to look elsewhere.

The Misery of Old Man Saynat

Life is very simple there. There is no electricity or running water. All you can see are sand, poplar trees and the silent Keriya River. Though the houses are scattered rather than cluster together, the relationship among the local people is quite close, like brothers. An old man, Kurban, told me he went to live in town two years ago for the first time in his life. He greeted everyone he met on the street but there were too many people to express his best wishes for them all. What's worse, young people didn't greet the elderly when they met. In less than a month, he came back home where he felt closer to Allah.

One day, Paridam made some 'Nan' (a special Islamic round cake and staple food) and asked Arsilan to bring them to the old man Saynat who lived near them. I went with him and learned

the story of the old man on our way. Twenty years ago, Saynat used to live a normal life until his wife went missing when she was tending the sheep alone. He was then 30 years old. His wife had disappeared as if taken away by wind and only the sheep were left. He couldn't believe it and waited with their child at the riverside for his wife. Three years passed, his wife had never showed up and his child died of illness. In the end, the Keriya River changed its course but he stayed awaiting for his wife. Now he is dying and hadn't eaten for two days. The local people called him 'Sarang' (which means silly man).

The old man lived in a small hut made of tree trunks and branches, which could hardly be called a home. When we went inside, I saw a skinny and timid old man of about 50 years old. Twenty years' of lonely and heart-breaking life in that isolated desert made him now a bag of bones. He seemed happy to see us. After greeting each other, he began to make jokes with Arsilan. He coughed occasionally and I felt sorry for his poor health.

The Children's Future

When we were back from Saynat's house, Paridam was lashing Gul with a rose willow twig. I tried to stop her, saying 'boldi' (which means enough in Uyghur). Gul hid herself behind my back, daring not to look at the twig in her mother's hand.

1. The water of the Keriya River is not good for drinking, so it is extremely important to take care of the well.

2. Many local old men are reaching 100 years of age but they are still very healthy and love eating mutton very much.

3. The wedding ceremony in Keriya. Arranged by their parents, girls get married at the early age of 12. It's hard to see the cruelty of life in the desert from this joyous scene.

4. The tranquil, beautiful desert where the Keriya people have been living for generations. It is the last pure land on earth. With the deterioration of the environment, it seems so fragile that a storm could wipe it all away.




1. Gul (centre) was only 12 when her marriage was arranged. Raising children is the only meaning of life for the Keriya women.

I saw a wound on Gul's left arm. Paridam said that Gul climbed a poplar tree to reach a bird nest and then fell off, scratching her arm on the branches. Paridam was punishing her for her naughtiness. I said I would get medicine to treat her wound, but Paridam grabbed a handful of stove dust and rubbed it on the wound, which is their local treatment for bleeding.

In the evening, Arsilan told me that Gul was getting married next month. Her fiancé lived in Deryaboyi, which is a bigger place than Keriya and has the only school in the area. Arsilan was happy about the arranged marriage; Gul had never met her husband-to-be. Indeed, girls in Keriya get married young, as there's no school for them; therefore, all they can do is to get married and raise children. That's the meaning for their life, and

though I couldn't understand it, I had no right to condemn their local customs. Life is so tough here that people have few choices for their future. All I could hope is that in the future Gul's children might be able to go to school instead of tending sheep.

Gul stood alone in the desert, staring at the Keriya River for a long time. Her father said that she was upset about leaving home and getting married. I walked to her and sat by her side. She raised her head and asked quietly if I was leaving Keriya soon. I nodded sadly. Suddenly, her tears were falling. I patted her head and asked her to go home. She wiped away her tears and remained sitting in silence. The moonlight turned the yellow desert into a pale colour. Her shadow was long and still. This is Keriya and they are the Keriya people. 

Translated by Huang He

Travel in Keriya...

Travel to Keriya can include possible dangers, such as sand storms. In addition, Keriya has no electricity or running water. It is the purest land in the world. It's best to inform the tourism administration before setting out in case of emergency.

Tel.: (0903) 6811 598

Transportation: Buses to Yutian County are available at the Long-Distance Bus Terminal in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang.

- A good Land Rover is needed for the journey from Yutian to Keriya. You may need a local guide since there is no road in the desert. It takes about 12 hours to cover the whole 200 km. Contact Yutian Tourism Administration for vehicle information.

- It takes 5 days to ride a camel from Yutian to Keriya. It is a good choice for sightseeing, but it requires a good physical health and the spirit of perseverance.
- It's best to go in a team of at least 5 trucks. Prepare sufficient supplies, such as drinking water, food and medicine. Money doesn't count for much in Keriya.

Accommodation: You may stay with local families or camp out. You shouldn't miss the star-lit night and the pale desert in the moonlight — a true fairy-world experience.

Overall, you'll need a brave and adventurous spirit besides all the travelling necessities.



Affections of Chaozhou

Photos by Stephen Or

Article by Lhasra Cheung

Hong Kong has long been known for its delicious Chaozhou cuisine — just look at the colourful lighting of the Chao-style restaurants and the crowds in front of their doors around Kowloon City, and you will see its popularity in the city. During the cold winter months, nothing could be better than a bowl of hot Chaozhou-style meatball soup, a golden, crispy oyster omelette, and a dish of braised goose. So why not take a trip to Chaozhou to trace to the source of Chaozhou cuisine? Apart from being able to taste genuine Chaozhou food, you can also explore other Chaozhou attractions.

The Culture of the 'Chaozhou' People

Chaozhou in Guangdong Province has bred talented people since ancient times, but starting from the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Chao people's quest for quality became even more intense. In everything they do, they strive for perfection. Cultivation is selective and intensive; crafts must be fine and executed with great skill; and to survive in this society, an individual must be scholarly and smart. He may be left behind. A society steeped in this tradition inevitably affects the way their ideology, and thus the Chaozhou people even today still pursue their refined culture. For example, Chaozhou embroidery and woodcarving

is exquisite, the skill of the craftspeople is incomparable Chaozhou cuisine and drinks requires great techniques. Even tricycle businesses on the streets provide free tour-guiding as a value-added service, displaying great hospitality to visitors.

Chaozhou city is not big; the street from the station to Kaiyuan Temple is the high street, and it is also the core commercial area, but no famous brand shops can be seen; only some colourful outlets selling Chaozhou embroidery are lining. A shop owner told me that Chaozhou is not only known for the amount of embroidery it produced (one of the top-four embroidery centres in China),

1. Chaozhou is one of the very few ancient cities in China that retains tricycles.



1. Chao-style embroidery shops near Kaiyuan Temple serve their customers with nice kungfu tea once they step inside.

2. Hu rongquan restaurant has more than 90 years of history. It sells many different traditional Chaozhou pastries and puddings.

3. Chaozhou people like to put a pair of old style oil lamps on the table when getting married.

4. Many traditional Chao-style pastry shops can be seen everywhere in Chaozhou.

5. A quaint tricycle parked in front of a Chao-style mansion. It is like going back in time.

but indeed its hand-made. It takes days to complete a one-square-metre piece, the complexity of a dragon and phoenix piece could take a month or even two. Because the labour costs are so high, the prices of these Chaozhou embroideries of course are not cheap. Therefore, how is it possible for these shops to run the businesses so well? The astute shop owner explained that 'Chaozhou people respect the customs which have been passed down from their ancestors, so a great quantity of Chao embroideries is used during major festivals, weddings and Chao opera; these items are irreplaceable.' Respect for the ancient culture and customs, means that much emphasis is put on quality, so people are prepared to pay more for

items made by hand with great skill.

Fragrant Smells from Ancient Streets

In your search for old-style Chaozhou snacks, ancient streets are a must because 'old is good'. You can smell the flavours of the old street when passing Kaiyuan Temple. Although renovations are everywhere, hundreds of years of refinement cannot be concealed in a few layers of dust; in fact, it has the opposite effect. I only stepped on dusty Taiping Road for the 'duck mother twist' from 'Hu rongquan'. For nearly 90 years, the sparkling signboard at the front door of this eatery has invited passers-by into its dark interior. It serves only the most traditional duck mother twist. From the name, 'duck mother twist', you would never imagine what kind of dish this is — it is not in fact related to a mother duck at all. Traditionally, sweet dumplings usually come with clear soup or sweet soup. For Chaozhou's 'duck mother twist', besides the glittering and translucent dumpling, it also cooked with diced sweet potato, taro, dried longan, red jujube, tremella and husked lotus. The smooth glutinous rice paired with sesame stuffing, and also the sweet potato and taro, enrich the flavour instantly. You can taste the delicious mix of the sweet dumpling, sweet potato and taro, tremella and husked lotus in rock sugar soup and also red jujube and dried longan — all these sweet ingredients in just one bowl of soup! It is surprising that people from a century ago were already familiar with the word 'cross-over'!

Taiping Road is the middle axis of the old city, East and West Road are on the vertical left and right, which symbolises the harmony of the east and west. This city has produced many great people; eminent families were everywhere.

A rich smell has brought me back to reality; good food always drags your nose unwittingly. At the junction of Jiadixiang and Xiaoxiping Roads, there is a little stall for fried radish cakes and pancakes; although they appear down-to-earth, their tempting smells are good enough to make you drool. The stall owner also introduced us to an excellent braised food shop next door. After the stream of people is gone, there were only a piece of braised goose, half a braised duck and a jelly-like dish remained. The shop owner could recognise us as foreigners at once and sliced the jelly for us to taste. He introduced us to the dish: 'This is the famous Chaozhou cold pork; it is coagulation of pig skin, pork and the juices of the meat during cooking — not too fat and not too greasy; it melts in the mouth. Our host said to serve the jelly with fish sauce and parsley; the freshness





and smoothness are incomparable'.

Surprises under the City Gate

A big signboard can be seen not long after passing through the water gate: lao-ke sweet and sour hibiscus dumpling. These dumplings can be cooked like a hibiscus rising out of the water, the flavour, sweet and sour. It is a must-try item. Just arrived at the door, the shop owner was making oyster pancakes. Plump small oysters were wrapped in golden egg batter frying in a pan of about one metre in diameter. The small oysters are semi-cooked — the essence of making splendid oysters pancake. If overcooking it would become too hard; and if undercooking it could taste raw.

In Chaozhou, you feel time is running too fast, and your tummy is indeed too small. Imagine how wonderful it would be if you could have eight or nine meals a day. Not having such a large tummy, it's better to stay in Chaozhou for a few more days, to discover more about its people, its food and its attractions.



Translated by Brian Fung

Travel Tips

Transport: Direct flight from Hong Kong to Shantou, but flights are limited and expensive. Most Hong Kong people would take the cross-county direct bus (few coaches daily, China Travel Service Ltd.) or buses are also available at Luohu, Shenzhen (and at Qiaoshe) (depart every 15 minutes, 5-hour journey at around 150 yuan). In addition, buses depart every 10 minutes at Qiaoshe bus stop in Shantou, one-hour journey at 15 yuan.

Accommodation:

Chaozhou Yingbin Inn, Hufeng Road Central (0788) 239 9888

Chaozhou Inn, Hufeng Road East (0788) 226 1168

Chaozhou-style snack guide:

Hu rongquan: Duck mother twist (sweet dumpling in soup), Chaozhou spring pastry (choice of sweet or salty), cake (Chao-style mooncake), spring roll

Address: Taiping Road (near the junction of Changli Road)

Lao-ke sweet and sour hibiscus dumpling: Sweet and Sour hibiscus dumpling, oyster pancake.

Address: Xiashuimen Street Tel: (0788) 391 9660

Business hours: 4:00 pm — 1:00 am

Traditional Chao-style cake shop: Chao-style mooncakes, meat pies

Address: Taiping Road, next to Hu rongquan

Laoxianghuang shop: Laoxianghuang, laoyaoji, laoshudi

Address: opposite the museum, under the Changli signboard

Braised Food Shop (Take away only, no seating):

Braised goose, Chaozhou-style duck, cold pork

Address: The junction of Xiaoxiping and Jiadixiang Roads

Business hours: 11:30 am — 12:30 pm, 4:30 pm — 5:50 pm, while stocks last.

Ancient city gourmet route: Kaiyuan Road - Changli signboard (Laoxianghuang) - Taiping Road (Hu rongquan/Old style cake shop) - Jiadixiang (sesame soup/almond soup) - Guangji bridge Binjiang corridor (salty and sour radish/cucumber/waxberry)



Stroll Around Kaohsiung by Metro

Photos & Article by Mickey Ching

Inaugurated in March this year, the Red Line of Kaohsiung Metro connects most of the popular spots in the city. Let's start riding!

Formosa Boulevard Station R10 Eat along the Street!

The nearest stop to Liuhe Night Market is Formosa Blvd., where the red line and orange line meet. When evening comes, one can feel the 'wok hei' (a term in Cantonese referring to the sophisticated flavour and tastes) of the foods coming from the snack stands at the night market. It is located between Chungshan 1st Road and Tzli 2nd Road and is about 350 metres long. You can find local foods such as wide rice noodle in the

popular restaurant chain Du Xiaoyue, grilled sleeve-fish longer than your palm, steamed rice cake in bamboo stick, tempura, fried chicken, sesame cake, bubble milk tea, Turkish ice-cream, stewed finless eel with rice and fermented bean curd. Endless snacks and desserts are waiting after your main course. There are so many choices that your stomach can't hold them all.

The Liuhe Night Market

Address: Liuhe Road, Chienkin District

Transportation: Formosa Blvd. Station on the red line

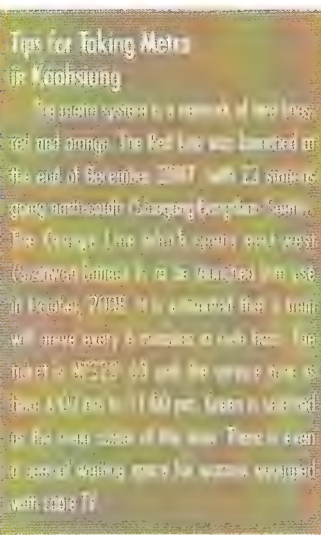


1. 'The eye of Kaohsiung'—the ferris wheel at Dream Mall.
2. Tomato is also a snack food of Kaohsiung.
3. The Night Market at Shinkuchan is popular among young people.
4. Kaohsiung History Museum in Japanese design.

Sizihwan Station 01 The Marvellous Sunset

The closest station to the sea is Sizihwan in the west of Kaohsiung City. Make your way first to the British Consulate-Takao. Takao (means beating a dog) and is the old name for Kaohsiung. The building, noted for its British architectural style is believed to be the very first western building in Taiwan. From there you'll have a good view of the

city and the port. In the setting sun, those arched corridors and red-brick outer wall give a romantic touch. And to heighten the experience, indulge yourself at an English high tea. Then, it's time to catch the ferry across the channel at the nearby Gushan Ferry Station to Cijin. Just like the outlying islands in Hong Kong, Cijin is rich in local sea food. Hire a bike to get around or watch the sunset in the park, either option definitely brings you a different sense of joy.





The British Consulate-Takao

Address: 20 Lianhai Road, Gushan District

Ferry Boat for Cijin Time: every 4–6 minutes from 6:00am — 00:00am, NT\$10/ person.

Transportation: Sizihwan Station on the Orange Line will open in October, 2008. To get there, take a taxi at Central Park Station.

Central Park Station R9 Music and Food Rave!

Central Park is an important station on the metro, because there are many scenic spots around this well-known landmark. The dark place of the past has now changed into 'the Urban Spotlight',

favoured by many young people. Designed and decorated together by 9 artists of Kaohsiung, the corridor exudes artistic elements. A live band show is on every night at the open-air café. It feels as if you were on the streets of Europe when sitting there.

Beside the music, you shouldn't miss the new Shinkuchan Night Market across the road. Compared with the one at Liuhe which is popular among Hong Kong tourists, this night market is attractive because so many of the common Taiwan snacks are one of its special features. Take your time to hunt for treasures in numerous shops and

stalls along the main road and bystreets, just like the famous areas of Harajuku and Uneo, Japan. Most stores sell clothes and accessories in Japanese or Korean style. Some can be up to 50 percent cheaper than those imported from Hong Kong.

Urban Spotlight and Shinkuchan Night Market

Address: Wufu Road, Sinsing District

Transportation: Central Park Station on Red Line

Weiweyung Station O10 Play 'Finding Nemo'!

Cheng Ching Lake is also called 'West Lake in Taiwan'. Being one of Chiang Kai-shek's favourite places to vacation, the Chinese palace-style buildings and winding staircase perfectly match the scenery of the wide lake. An abandoned underground tunnel-structure, which was secretly built to protect against nuclear bomb attack, is now 'the Ocean World', presenting rare sea animals from all the oceans around the world. Creatures such as Brownbanded Bamboo Shark (*Chiloscyllium punctatum*) and Cerianthidae do not only have strange names, but also look bizarre.

Cheng Ching Lake

Address: 32 Dapi Road, Niao-Sung Township

Tel: (07)3800 821 Entrance fee: NT\$100

Time: 6:30 am — 5:30 pm

Transportation: Weiweyung Station on the Orange Line will open in 2008.

Taxi is available at Central Park Station.



Kaisyuan Station R6 A Dream Tour

You'll find the first shopping mall in Kaohsiung here, 'Dream Mall', which is also the largest in Taiwan. Bookstores like Eslite and Kingstone where you can browse as long as you like are best choices for book fans. Small furniture of Japanese design, which only cost NT\$39 each, are available in Daiso Department Store. However, the most favoured place is 'the eye of Kaohsiung'—a ferris wheel on top of the store. All the 36 dazzling carriages are printed with cartoon figures for example, Hello Kitty and Purin Dog. It is the only ferris wheel in Taiwan that has a luxurious sea view, so even to queue for one hour is worth it!

Address: 789, Jhonghua 5th Road, Cianjhen District

Ticket: NT\$150

Transportation: Kaisyuan Station on Red Line

Translated by Huang He

To Kaohsiung

Transportation: direct flight by Dragonair, Tel.: (852)3193 3888

Climate: the average annual temperature is 24°C and the average temperature in winter is 20°C

Currency: HK\$1=NT\$4

Taiwan Entry Permit is required for both HK SAR passport holders and BNO Passport holders:

Chung Hwa Travel Service, Tel.: (852)2525 8316

1.The very first western building in Taiwan—the British Consulate—Takao.

2.The Shiinkuchan Night Market is regarded as Taipei's Ximending in Kaohsiung.

3.The Romantic sunset at Siziwan.

4.The various sea animals in 'Ocean World', Cheng Ching Lake.

5.Love River is Kaohsiung's river of love.

Lake Tai in Spring

Photos & Article by Xie Guanghui

Caressed by a gentle spring breeze, the old junks sailed on the glimmering Lake Tai, their outlines, together with the distant Xishan Island, all shrouded in mist, sometimes half hidden as if in a dream, and embraced by the vast stretch of green water. Among the 72 peaks on Lake Tai, Xishan (or Western Hill) is the largest. In addition to its charming scenery of still water and hills, ancient villages set in an idyllic landscape adorned with flowers and trees, Xishan is more famous for its Biluochun tea.

On the fairyland of Xishan Island, there are a fair number of historical sites set among a wealth of natural scenery, showing off its rich and profound culture. It is said that the rare beauty Xishi, who lived in the Warring States Period over 2,000 years ago, together with her lover Fan Li after they helped the King of Yue to defeat the State of Wu, rowed a boat on Lake Tai while living there in seclusion. This beautiful touching story has made mist-covered Xishan even more inspirational.





A Water Town Journey to Lake Tai

Lake Tai, bestriding Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces and abounding in seafood, is a renowned scenic area and a hub of southern China's waterways. Many fishermen build their homes on boats, depending on fishing and aquatic breeding for a living. However, with deterioration of the lake's water quality in recent years, big blue-green algae tides appeared last year. Now that a year has passed, what does the lake look like now?

Getting out of the wharf at the Southern Gate Pier in Suzhou, I went to Guangfu Town by Bus No. 65. Located 28 km west of Suzhou by Lake Tai at the foot of Dengwei Mountain, Guangfu Town is a peninsula of 58 sq km stretching into eastern Lake Tai.

The town has several bays divided by small islands. The bus reached Guangfu in two hours and I got off at the pier where there are many waterfront restaurants. The roadside market of dried seafood became lively at the sight of visitors, and smiling faces appeared from behind strings of dried fish. Vendors were hawking the 'Three Whites of Lake Tai' in Mandarin with a Suzhou accent. The 'Three Whites of Lake Tai' refers to the silver fish, white fish and white shrimp. As the silver fish is not available in all seasons and dies shortly after



being caught, it is rare to taste it fresh, and the fish can only be preserved by fast freezing or drying. The fresh white fish is rare too, but the white shrimps are plenty. With thin shells and tender meat, the white shrimp there is extremely delicious. Though it is hard to find fresh silver and white fish, I noticed, after a stroll in the market, the dried ones are sold everywhere, and reasonably priced.

Two Types of Visitors to Lake Tai

Visitors to Lake Tai are of two kinds: those from other places who come mainly to enjoy the lakescape at Yuantouzhu in Wuxi and the East and West hills in Suzhou; the second type are local visitors, living either in Jiangsu or Zhejiang provinces who come often just to taste the 'Three Whites of Lake Tai'. Tired of eating fish and shrimp bred in ponds with an earthy taste, they

just want to have a change. Most of them drive here at weekends or holidays on a 'country tour'. Talking about a tour on Lake Tai, most visitors from elsewhere would first think of Yuantouzhu in Wuxi.

Lake Tai came into being after the sediment from the lower reaches of the Yangtze and Qiantang rivers deposited and formed an ancient bay. Straddling across Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, China's third largest fresh water lake, covering an area of 2,250 sq km and abounding in rich water resources, is at the centre of southern China's waterways, with the key function of water conservancy and irrigation. For a long time fishermen have lived here and there within the vast lake area, casting their nets at night and hauling them in early in the morning. The catch is sold shortly after the fishing boat reaches

the shore, for exchange of oil, salt, rice and vinegar... Throughout the year, they make the floating boat their home, in the same way the nomadic herdsmen move on the grasslands. So far Yugang (Fishing Harbour) Village is the only fishermen's village on Lake Tai.

Fishing Boats — A Floating Home

Looking west from the small hill east of Yugang Village, I was amazed that Lake Tai is as vast as a sea. Because it was in the fishing off-season, the wharf was packed with boats moored there.

1. The great expanse of Lake Tai, on which sailboats seem to float from the depths of history.

2. Right after reaching the shore, diligent fishermen begin to mend their nets.

3. Owners of waterfront restaurants come to collect the white shrimps every day — one of the 'Three Whites' of Lake Tai.



An old man was weaving a fishing net and shrimp basket, while an old lady was carefully spreading out washed fish and shrimps on a bamboo board, before moving it to dry in the sunshine. Some children were frolicking happily on the boat, and a young woman was hauling up buckets of water from the lake to wash the boat.

In the past, fishing boats on Lake Tai were mostly wooden, each some 30 m long with 7 masts. Weighing over 70 tons, they looked just like the ships the Ming Dynasty (1368 — 1644) navigator Zheng He used in his great western expedition, but much smaller in size. The boats have three parts: the fore is the operational area; the middle part is double-decked: the upper one

is the living room, and the lower one has the bedrooms and storerooms; the navigation cabin and kitchen are at the stern. In the 1970s, because of the short supply of timber, traditional wooden boats gradually disappeared from Lake Tai, and were replaced by cement boats. The latter, are some 20 metres long with 3 masts, with a 30-ton capacity.

Jiang Zhaojun, 52, bought a cement boat for over a 1,000 yuan in 1982. As they are not safe enough and more likely to sink upon collision, after the year 2000 the government began to ban the production of cement boats, and replaced them with iron boats.

Today, as fishermen all have homes on land, their boats are mainly used for fishing. Equipped with a diesel

motor, sails and masts have become unnecessary, so 12 m is long enough for a boat. Jiang Zhaojun doesn't like iron boats, as he says that it takes too much — 30,000~40,000 yuan — to make an iron boat, and you have to pay for the maintenance and paint it every year, which is also costly and time-consuming. Now seafood breeding on Lake Tai is developing rapidly. Prices for fish and shrimps are low, but prices for diesel are surging year by year, making the cost for fishing soar unbearably. Seeing everyone was busy setting up posts to fix the net — enclosures for the coming of the fishing festival on 1 September, he was mostly worried about lightning storms in August. In a storm, iron boats are most vulnerable — there is nowhere to hide and people on board could be killed if struck by lightning.

Jiang's cement boat was also moored at the bay. He was quite attached to it because it's the first boat he ever bought. The cement boat, he said, is too heavy and one has to be very careful to steer it to reach the shore, avoiding bumping into anything; but the boat is also very steady and he doesn't have to worry about it in any weather. When I asked him if he would like to have a wooden boat, he smiled helplessly, 'Who can afford it at a price of 700,000 or 800,000 yuan?'

Price for Rare Wooden Boats Rocketing

Now there are only two large 7-mast wooden boats of the traditional type on Lake Tai, one bought by a Wuxi businessman for his own use, the other by a private collector, also a businessman in Taiwan. I heard from many locals that the Taiwan businessman was really a shrewd investor, as the boat he paid 200,000 yuan for was worth several times more in just a few years. However, there is more to the story. I found its former owners, Mr. and Mrs. Zhang Zhifang, who were still living on the boat. Mr. Zhang, in his 60s, is a man of few words, but his wife has a bright and cheerful disposition. When asked about the boat's history, she was quite eloquent, 'the boat is older than me. His grandfather had it built with

quality teak, which is light but hard and durable. The boat came from his grandfather to his father, then to him. People all used this kind of big boat before, but nowadays I'm afraid you can't find any master carpenters who can build them. Big as it is, the boat is actually not heavy, quite easy to handle, and is even faster than other types when you raise the sail and start to move. A sailboat is the best choice for fishing, because it makes no sound to scare the shoal. Also, it is very comfortable to live on all year round, warm in winter and cool in summer. Neither cement nor iron boats are as good, especially the iron boat, where it is too hot to stand in summer and freezing all through winter.' When asked why they sold it, she said, 'We're both getting old, and our children are all working in companies, so we are the last generation of fishermen.' I asked them if they regretted selling the boat as its price had gone up to some 800,000 yuan. She said resolutely, 'No, it is sold to the businessman in Taiwan, but we are still living on it and are paid 1,000 yuan a month as a

maintenance fee.'

More Fishermen but Less Fish Caught

Wang Zhixiang, once engaged in logistics in the Lake Tai area, became an aquatic product purchaser about eight years ago. He says that Lake Tai is quite shallow, only 1.5 metres on average, so it is very easy to get stranded if you're not familiar with the navigation route. When asked why he changed his job, he said that the economy in the cities around Lake Tai used to be undeveloped and transportation was mostly done by waterways. Now with the rapid economic development every village has access to highways and even Xishan Island can be easily reached through a newly established bridge. When travel became so convenient, waterways logistics was no longer lucrative, so he switched to the aquatic business. In the fishing season, Mr. Wang drives his motor boat at dawn to collect fish from fishermen on Lake Tai. The lake areas near the shore are mostly contracted to specialised households for aquatic breeding, so he had to drive for over two

hours to find fishermen in the central lake area or near Zhejiang Province, he said.

As it consumes too much time and diesel to sell their daily catch, fishermen there welcome collectors. Short as the fishing season on Lake Tai — from 1 September to the end of next January, the off-season is observed in the seven months in the rest of the year, when the fishermen have to make a living by catching shrimps and doing aquatic breeding. Despite the fact the government puts large numbers of fish fries into the lake every year, the amount of fish is not increasing, because first, the fishing equipment is getting more efficient; second, while the diameter of the net holes were 6 cm to catch big fish in the past, it is now only 1.2 cm, catching fish both big and small, which is very unfavourable for eco-protection.

A more serious problem than fishing

1. The Zhang couple still live on a big wooden boat. On a sunny day they are busy sunning the quilt on deck.

2. With the day's catch sold, the couple can relax and take a rest.

3. The fascinating lakescape is intoxicating. (by Zhang Bo)





resources is Lake Tai's ecology. In the last decade or more, many counties around the lake marched into China's top 10 rich list, their economic returns coming mostly from township and village enterprises whose industrial wastewater was often discharged directly into the lake. So whenever the temperature surges over 30°C, blue-green algae appears.

Blue-Green Algae Deprive Wuxi People of Drinking Water

Blue-green algae are tiny organisms in water, looking like a string of spectre haunting Lake Tai. In favourable conditions, they grow fast, and if blown to the shore, their dead bodies will pile up, forming some 10-km-long and

over 10-cm thick water blooms, which feels like glue to touch. In the process of multiplication, it will consume a large amount of dissolved oxygen, killing other life forms in the lake. The appearance in the past was ignored by people, as they thought it was harmless, though it might have looked unsightly. When blue-green algae were washed by rain and became scattered, they simply faded from people's memory. Some farmers used blue-green algae as fertilisers in the past, and even nicknamed it 'sea oil'.

For a long time, people have trusted water works as their daily source of water, believing that one after another treatment measures in the plants would keep away all the pollutants and make

the water absolutely safe. Yet it is not that simple. People didn't realise that it is not so easy to drive away blue-green algae until 29 May 2007 when blue-green algae stealthily passed through the plants' defence lines and directly invaded people's lives. When Wuxi's citizens turned on the tap, they smelt an awful stench. Even after washing their hands with hand sanitizer, the smell was still there. Alarm spread through the city, and the supermarket was full of people buying bottled mineral water.

Generally speaking, since Lake Tai is so vast with strong waves and winds, it should be able to clean itself except at the indented bays where it is easier for blue-green algae to grow because



of the stagnant flow. But now when the water quality has become poor enough for blue-green algae to grow even in the central area of the lake, the problem is really very serious. The best way to treat blue-green algae is to use copper sulphate. This chemical method is not applicable as Lake Tai provides drinking water. Chub could be a good choice for this purpose in a biological perspective.

Yet it is effective only when blue-green algae is controllable in a limited area. Last year the blue-green algae had become so enormous that other life forms did not have any chance of survival. When chubs were put into the lake, they were soon poisoned to death by the large amount of toxin emitted. Also, treating the problem

with chubs has a problem of its own — fish excrement might remain on the blue-green algae. While chubs destroy all the blue-green algae, they are also carriers of it. They will carry blue-green algae to a larger area while swimming around.

Water Quality Made Worse

Protection of Lake Tai has been a challenge for the local government all these years. Aimed at protecting the ecology for fishing, seven no-fishing periods have been designated each year. Meanwhile, to help people make a living, the government encourages lakeside fishermen to develop enclosed aquatic breeding by the shore. This provides a more stable income, and is much more profitable than fishing. Driven by profit, now many of those engaged in net enclosed aquatic breeding on eastern Lake Tai are not career fishermen, but profiteers entering the business through various relations; some were even involved in selling areas of water by simply netting it off without really doing any fish breeding.

Such a situation resulted in a large area of space flanking the navigation route being occupied by aquatic breeders; bamboo poles and fishing nets appear densely on the lake. Once aquatic breeding becomes overdeveloped, the feed put into the water can result in water eutrophication.

Driven by the campaign of lakeside enclosures, over 100,000 mu (1 mu eqv. to 1/6 acre) of lake area has been used for aquatic breeding. Part of the quota has been given to hairy crabs, which are popular on the market. The administrative department concerned approves 80 mu for each breeding household, but usually a household would use 30 mu more to breed crabs. Every year, they pay 70 yuan per mu as a resources added-value fee, and the excessive 30 mu would be charged threefold. Yet with the price of 120 yuan per kg for crabs, the yield of over 3,000 kg from some 100 mu would bring a profit way bigger than the charge. This has worsened Lake Tai's water quality.

Time to Clean up Lake Tai

Appearance of blue-green algae is

a symbol of an aging lake. According to the experts, owing to man's excessive exploitation, it is unavoidable that eutrophication will occur. Human activities have quickened the natural process of eutrophication. The measures are even more difficult to execute in Lake Tai, which is experiencing eutrophication after years of unsolved problems. The discharge of the untreated industrial waste water is causing the fish to die and causing degradation of the ecosystem.

The project to transfer water from Yangtze River to Lake Tai is intended to use the torrential flows from the river to clean up the lake. This could in a way limit eutrophication to prevent the outbreak of blue-green algae, but it cannot solve the problem from its root. To thoroughly treat blue-green algae, both industrial discharge and aquatic breeding must be controlled. Recently, it was reported that large-scale breeding was decreasing on Lake Tai, to give the lake a cleanup.

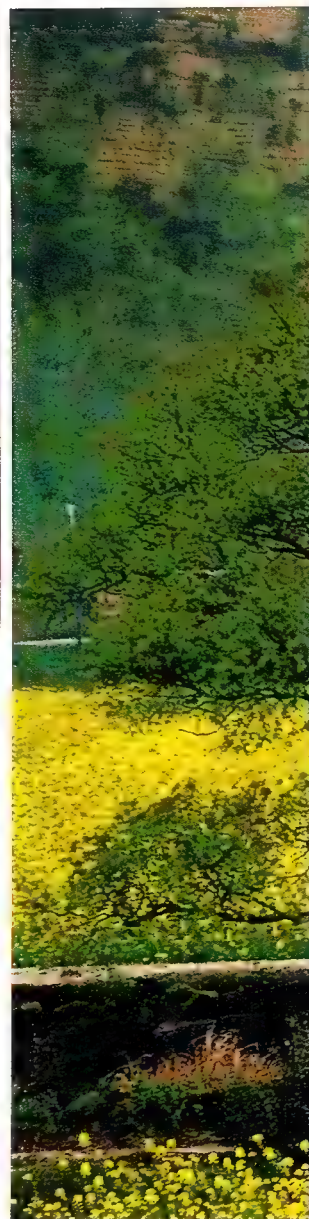
Map of Lake Tai in Jiangsu Province



1. Every year on 1 September, a grand Fishing Festival is held in Guangfu Fishing Village. It is spectacular, with some 100 sailboats gathering at the harbour.







Roaming around Xishan Ancient Village

As the largest island in the vast mist-covered Lake Tai, Xishan in Dongting covers an area of over 70 sq km, close to the size of Hong Kong Island. A dozen ancient villages are scattered here, some nearly 1,000 years old. They were built at the waterside by some large and prestigious families fleeing from the Central Plains area. The ancient residential houses with dark roof tiles and white walls form an integrated whole with the memorial archways, bays, small bridges, orchards and tea gardens.

Prestigious Families Fled to Xishan

Historical data shows that the first considerable number of immigrants — the Zheng clan from Henan Province — came to Xishan at the end of the Sui Dynasty (581 — 618) to escape from the chaos of war. But extensive development of this small island didn't happen until the Northern Song Dynasty (960 — 1127) after a large group of royal family members, high officials, prominent businessmen and celebrities, heard about this peaceful island away from the chaotic world in their southward flee and swarmed here. They began to build their homes on the locked away hills surrounded by a vast expanse of water, making Xishan Island one of the safest

places for those coming from the north. At that time, the population reached more than 10,000, including dignitaries and high officials; at one point there were over 60 surnames. The large amount of money, advanced technology and rich culture of the Central Plains kick-started the local economic development. In the Ming Dynasty (1368 — 1644) with the rise of navigation, water transport became easier and more villages appeared. By the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644 — 1911), there were over 130 villages on Xishan Island, each clustered with at least a dozen or even over 100 of impressive houses.

It is said that the most famous Chinese beauty Xishi and Fan Li, a well-known statesman and strategist of the Spring and

Autumn Period (770B.C. — 476B.C.) used to live in seclusion in Luli Village. Located at the western end of the island, the village has 井-shaped streets and a Zhengjing Harbour excavated in the Sui and Tang dynasties, which courses north-south in connection with Lake Tai. This was the Zheng clan's harbour built in the age of navigation, commonly called 'the Official Boat Harbour' because it was only used for large official boats. The 1.5-km-long waterway leading to the mouth of the harbour has maintained its ancient format, with yellow stones neatly placed at its banks. Crossing the waterway are Ming and Qing bridges of Nanxing, Yongning and Zhongqiao. It is delightful to look at the clear-cut outline of the waterside village



2



3

from afar, with dark tiles and white walls along winding lanes. Walking among the ancient houses, memorial archways, bridges, orchards and tea gardens by the harbour, one could appreciate the idyllic mood of 'Opening the window to see mountain peaks at dawn; closing the door to hear the sound of scull at night.'

According to the Record of Xishan Township, from 1930 to 1937, passenger ships running between Wuxi and Hushan stopped here, and the cargo carried to and from places in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces was loaded and unloaded at Luli dock, which boosted commercial trade. There used to be all kinds of stores, from tea houses, restaurants, groceries, pharmacies, to barber's, dressmakers,'

butcher's shops, and stores selling grain, bean curd and aquatic products. After the Japanese invaded China in 1937, passenger ships stopped running, most of the shops closed down, and the bustling market declined rapidly. It has been silent ever since. Villagers then returned to their original life of fishing, farming and picking tea leaves. Now 90% of the residents in Luli Village are descendants of the Zheng clan.

1. Most old buildings in southern China have a compound courtyard structure, arranged symmetrically along an axis with one courtyard behind another.

2. Yongfeng Bridge, located in the south of Zhili Village on Xishan Township and built in the Qing Dynasty, has a history of over 300 years. (by Zhou Rende)

3. The Huang's Ancestral Temple on Xishan Island.



Fuchai and Xishi Appreciating the Moon

The ancient village of Mingyuewan is at the southern end of Xishan Island. Legend has it that some 2,500 years ago Fuchai, the King of the State of Wu, and the beauty Xishi came here to appreciate the moon, hence came the village name, meaning a bay of bright moon. Since large groups of high officials of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127 — 1279) came to find retreat here, the quiet bay became lively. From the mid-18th to the early 19th century in the Qing Dynasty the village saw its most prosperous period when a large number of imposing residential houses appeared, together with ancestral memorial temples, flagstone streets, piers and docks. These houses and temples, graceful with exquisite carvings on brick, wood and stone, are typical of the

architectural style of southern China.

Mingyuewan Village covers an area of about 9 hectares and has some 100 households and over 400 villagers, most of whom live by planting flowers and fruit, Biluochun tea and fish farming. People here are mostly surnamed Deng, Qin, Huang or Wu, as descendants of the nobility of the Southern Song Dynasty. The two main streets running lengthways from east to west, and many lateral lanes across them, form a patchwork like a chessboard, hence its name Qipan streets. Since southern China is often rainy, the old streets are paved with dark granite, the central flagstones are level, and the darker stones at the sides vertical, interspersed with some cobblestones. After centuries of wear and tear and rain, these old rough stones have become



smooth and slippery. Flanking the streets are buildings of the Ming and Qing dynasties, their mottled white walls and dark tiles showing their historical value.

Over 3,000 Carvings on Bricks and Wood

Xu's Carved House in Tangli Village, also known as the New House of Renbentang, was only opened to visitors



recently. Built in 1855 in the Qing Dynasty, it was over 50 years older than the well-known Carved House in Dongshan. This ancient architectural compound occupies an area of 2,100 sq m, spreading out and winding its way on the Tangli Hill before ending among ordinary residential houses. Though not easily sighted, its mottled walls still speak of its past magnificence. There are finely carved floor-to-ceiling windows between the wings, main hall and courtyard. The rear hall in the second courtyard and the flower wing halls on its eastern and western sides are the most impressive. As the owners' living room, the rear hall houses a floor-to-ceiling folding screen carved

with plum blossom, orchards, bamboo and chrysanthemum. The side flower halls east of the rear hall are girls' boudoirs, and the western ones are the owner's study room. There is a three-metre-high Lake Tai stone in the courtyards of both eastern and western wing halls. Lake Tai stones so refined and large are very rare nowadays. The colourful camellia tree in the courtyard of the eastern hall is 150 years old and so is especially precious. The building was named Carved House because it possesses more than 3,000 brick and wood carvings.

There are a dozen ancient villages on Xishan Island, including Tangli, Mingyuewan, Luli, Dongcun, Xiaoxia, Hancun and Houbu. At its peak, Tangli Village alone had over 70 halls of different styles, and Dongcun Village still has over 30 large houses of the Ming and Qing periods. Such refined and elegant buildings, which are fully comparable with the massive official residences in Suzhou, are rare finds in China today.

Traditional Ethics Esteemed

Residents on Xishan Island set great store by their inherited reputation of loving to do philanthropic work, and they regard loyalty, piety, benevolence, and being well-educated and sensible as noble and glorious. A couplet was carved on the Song Dynasty bluestone Yuhong Bridge at the entrance to Tangli Village, 'Wishing more good people are born and more good deeds are done'.

This intangible cultural heritage is passed down from generation to generation, making the ancient villages what they are today. Almost all the villages on Xishan Island are communities of big clans, each with a prestigious family as the pillar. Many villages are simply named after big clans, such as Macun, Yuxiang, Dongcai, Laojiaqiao, and Qinjiabao. Ancestral temples are also set up in many of the villages, among which are a dozen influential ones of the Xu, Qin, Han, and Zheng clans, etc. At New Year and during festivals, members of a clan will hang up their ancestors' pictures in the temples and offer sacrifices to them. Most of the big clans have genealogies, maps of the houses in the village or area, and established family rules or ancestral admonishments, which contain valuable traditional ethics.

After all the years, the ancient villages on Xishan Island have integrated with the landscape of the lake and hills, contributing to the treasure house of human history and culture.



1. A dozen villages are scattered on Xishan Island, where villagers seem to live in a picture book.

2. While brick walls are generally erect and straight, the ones in the ancient villages on Xishan Island have a unique Ming structure — bricks all step back at successive courses.

3. The colourful camellia tree in the flower hall courtyard of the carved house is 150 years old and so it is very precious.

4. In this carved house, girls' boudoirs used to be east of the rear hall.

5. Exquisite and intriguing carvings can be found everywhere at Mingyue Temple, from the drum-shaped Bearing Stone on both sides of the house gate to the doorhead and architrave.



Biluochun A Famed Green Tea

There is a great variety of tea in China. Generally speaking, people in the north like to drink jasmine tea; oolong tea is preferred by people in Guangdong and Fujian provinces, and green tea is preferred by people living south of the Yangtze River. At the mention of green tea, Longjing (or Dragon Well) tea of the West Lake in Hangzhou might first come to mind. In fact, Suzhou's Dongting Biluochun tea gained fame much earlier than Longjing tea. The latter didn't become recognised by the court until the Qing Dynasty, yet the former was recognised as early as the Tang Dynasty.

According to local records on tea production, in 757, the Tang Dynasty tea scholar Lu Yu, also known as the Chinese Sage of Tea, and poet Liu Changqing came to Xishan Island in Lake Tai for an inspection. Introduced by the abbot of the Baoshan Temple, they came to pick and taste tea at the garden by the

Shuiyue Temple. It is said that the spiral shape of the Xiaqing tea was created by the monks there after being inspired by the shape of the Buddha's curly hair. In 1699 when Emperor Kangxi came to Lake Tai on his inspection tour, the Jiangsu governor presented the tea to the emperor who highly praised it and

renamed it Biluochun (literally green spiral spring), as it was picked from the Biluo Peak in early spring and was green with a spiral shape.

Normally tea trees grow well in shaded places, but the tea trees for Biluochun are planted alternately with fruit trees of loquat, orange and waxberry. With their branches, leaves and roots all connecting and touching each other, the shaded sunlight pierces through fruit tree leaves and, taking with it the light fragrance of fruit and flowers, suffuses into the tea leaves.

Three Tips for Picking Tea Leaves

Three points are stressed when picking tea leaves for Biluochun: early, tender and clean. Every year, tea leaf picking starts around the Vernal Equinox and ends around the Grain Rain Day on 20 or 21 April, with the tea leaves picked before the Pure Brightness Festival on 5 or 6 April as the most valuable. Normally the tea leaves are 1.6 to 2 cm long, shaped in a curve similar to that of a sparrow's tongue, hence its nick name. The fact that it takes about 68,000 to 74,000 tea sprouts to produce 500 g of

high-class Biluochun shows how tiny and tender the tips are and how much time is needed to produce this extraordinary tea. In the tea-picking season, the slopes of both eastern and western hills at Dongting are covered with green trees, accompanied by peach and pear flowers — a fascinating landscape of fragrant spring. The fresh and tender tea sprouts, rich in amino acid and tea polyphenols, together with fresh air, favourable geographical conditions and traditional technology, are essential guarantees for the quality of Biluochun.

Tea farmers must go through eight steps by first carefully picking out all impurities, the de-enzyming the fresh tea leaves, kneading, rubbing, rolling, stirring and drying. Different from preparing other kinds of green teas, the techniques for processing Biluochun tea require kneading and rolling the leaves repeatedly by hand while stirring the tea leaves in the frying pan. The continued operation can ensure that the layer of fine fuzz does not come off and the leaves will curve up like a spiral. The slender tea leaves of Biluochun are bright green, covered all over by a layer of fine fuzz. After the first brew, the

tea leaves look bright and tenderly green. With a strong aroma, the brew provides a sweet aftertaste.

Good Water and Right Way of Making Tea

It is known to all tea drinkers that good tea alone is not enough; it needs to go with good water. Spring water from mountains is filtered by rocks, and has rich minerals and little floating substances. Stable in quality and safely clean, spring water tastes sweet and pure. Many people have the misunderstanding that the hotter the water, the better. In fact precious green tea cannot stand boiling water, and so too Biluochun. The right way to make tea is use water about 70 to 80 degrees without covering the lid, so that the hot water will cool down naturally.

Since the tea leaves of Biluochun are very tender, a clean transparent glass will show off their beauty. Put into the glass, the tea leaves will sink slowly to the bottom. In a short while, the green tea sprouts may swim up and down in the glass like green clouds, and their fresh fragrance will become apparent in the steam. In a few minutes, the tea leaves

gradually unfold and the fuzzy leaves will sink like snow flakes, leaving the tea green. While tasting Biluochun, you will feel the tea is faintly scented and fresh with a light colour at first; for the second cup, the tea becomes greener and the fragrance is mellow and pleasant, leaving a lingering sweet aftertaste in the mouth. When it comes to the third cup, you are no longer tasting the tea alone, but the fragrant smell of spring on Lake Tai.

Ways to Keep Tea Leaves Fresh

Biluochun is best when consumed in the same year it has grown, but the tea leaves can also last for the next year if they are properly preserved. The traditional way of preserving tea leaves is to wrap them up with clean cotton paper that has no smell. Next, pieces

1. The technique for collecting tea leaves is very demanding. Every year tea-picked starts around the Vernal Equinox and ends around the Grain Rain Day, with the tea leaves picked before the Pure Brightness Festival as the most valuable.

2. Different from preparing other kinds of green teas, the technique for processing Biluochun tea is highly demanding, requiring kneading, rubbing and rolling the leaves repeatedly by hand while keeping the tea leaves in the frying pan. The continued operation can ensure that the layer of fine fuzz does not come off and the leaves will curve up in a spiral.





of lime are packed in bags and placed alternately between layers of tea leaves in a vat, which should be covered and sealed before being placed somewhere shady with good ventilation. Tea leaves are quick to absorb any smell in the air, and it is almost impossible to remove the smell before it is released when the tea is made. In recent years people also try to preserve tea leaves with a plastic bag, vacuumise it, and put it in the refrigerator

with a temperature 10 degrees below zero. The tea leaves will look, smell and taste as refreshing as new ones.

Selecting by Colour, Smell, Taste and Shape

It requires special knowledge to select and identify true Biluochun. Briefly four aspects should be considered: look at the colour, smell the fragrance, try the taste, and observe the shape.

Firstly, authentic Biluochun tea leaves

are bright, with a yellowish-green colour, while the colours of the fake ones are dull and a darker yellowish without any lustre. Secondly, real Biluochun has the natural quality of flower and fruit fragrance. If you can get some fresh tea leaves and smell them at the tea processing shop, the fragrance is especially strong, because the tea trees grow in the orchards with the peculiar soil and water on Xishan Island. Fake Biluochun is not fragrant enough, and might even smell 'leafy'. Thirdly, authentic Biluochun tastes pleasantly smooth in mouth, leaving a sweet, refreshing and mellow aftertaste, while the fake tea leaves a damp, cold, bitter feeling, without any aftertaste. Fourthly, authentic Biluochun has a spiral appearance and it is covered by a layer of fine fuzz, in a bright green silver colour, but the fake ones hardly have a layer of fine fuzz and a colour of silver green, although they might look spiral in shape. Judging from the four features of Biluochun, it is not too difficult to distinguish the real from the false.

©

Translated by Ling Yu

1. The fact that it takes about 68,000 to 74,000 tea leaf tips to produce 500 g of high-class Biluochun shows how tiny and tender the tips are and how much time is needed to produce this extraordinary tea.

2. Tea farmers must first of all pick out all the impurities before starting to stir the tea leaves in a pan.

3. The duration and degree of heating is crucial to the manual processing of Biluochun tea.

4. The statue of Lu Yu, known as the Sage of Chinese Tea, was repaired after it was unearthed from Shuiyuewu on Xishan Island, and a stele is dedicated to him.



Tips for Touring Lake Tai



Restaurants on water in Lake Tai

Lake Tai has an area of 2,250 sq km and is China's third largest freshwater lake. It is endowed with a special landscape of mountains and water. Among the islands on the lake, Dongshan (Eastern Hill) and Xishan (Western Hill) Islands are the best known, as they are the places of origin of the famed Biluochun tea.

To and from Suzhou

Suzhou is often the first stop for touring Lake Tai, as it occupies one third of the lake area where Dongshan and Xishan Islands and Guangfu Town are located.

By Plane:

There is no international airport in Suzhou, but as it is so close to Shanghai, people flying to and from Suzhou stop at Shanghai's Hongqiao or Pudong airports. A special highway connects Suzhou with the Hongqiao (about one hour's drive) and Pudong (about 1.5 hours' drive) airports.

By Train:

Suzhou Railway Station is located outside the Pingmen Gate north of the ancient city area. This building of typical south China architectural style has eastern and western waiting rooms: the eastern one is for those going to Shanghai, and the western one, towards Nanjing. Eighteen bus lines connect the railway station with places in the city, and special buses also go to such scenic areas as Xishan Island, Zhouzhuang, Luzhi and Tongli.

By Bus:

There are South, North, West and Wuzhong Long Distance Bus Stations in Suzhou. The North (Pingmen) Station (with buses heading for northern Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Fujian provinces) is located on No. 29 Xihui Road. You can reach it by walking eastward from the railway square along the Chezhan (Station) Road for about 500 m. The South Station (with buses going to Shanghai, Hangzhou and southern Jiangsu provinces) can be found about 20 m north of Renmin Bridge on Renmin Road. The West Station (with buses to Anhui and Shandong provinces) stands at the junction of Jinshan Road north of Suzhou Amusement Land. Wuzhong Station is at Renmin Road where buses go to Zhouzhuang, Tongli, Kunshan and northern Jiangsu Province.

Suzhou City Proper → Guangfu Town: Bus No. 63 runs from Wuzhong Station to Guangfu Town. Bus No. 65 runs between the Southern Gate Pier and Guangfu Town. Six yuan a ride for the 2-hour drive, buses leave every 15 minutes. Motor tricycle is the means of transportation in Guangfu Town, at a starting price of 5 yuan.

Suzhou City Proper Xishan Town: Bus No. 58 runs from Wuzhong Station to Zhigongshan Parking Lot at Xishan, 5 yuan for the 2-hour drive. The bus leaving every 15 minutes, passes along the route of scenic the attractions in Xishan. Bus No. 91 runs from the west side of Suzhou Railway

Station to Zhigongshan Parking Lot at Xishan, 4 yuan for the 1.5-hour drive, passing along the scenic route with the main attractions in Xishan. The bus leaves every 20 minutes. The town has medium-size buses running between various tourist attractions, 2 yuan a ride.

By Ship:

Suzhou passenger pier is located at the northern end of the Renmin Bridge on Renmin Road, with ships mainly heading for Hangzhou, Huzhou and Xiashi in Zhejiang Province, Meicun in Wuxi, Luxu in Wujiang, Xishan in Wuzhong, and Changshu, Dongtang and Zhangjiagang in Jiangsu Province, and Qingpu in Shanghai. The ship running at night between Suzhou and Hangzhou is most recommended; it sets out at dusk and arrives in the morning along the Beijing-Hangzhou Great Canal. One can not only appreciate the charm of the ancient canal while passing through many small water towns, but also save an overnight hotel charge. Traffic is very convenient as the passenger piers in both cities are located in downtown areas.

Four regular ships run between Suzhou and Hangzhou every day, leaving Suzhou at about 5:30 pm and reaching Hangzhou at around 6 am. Facilities such as air-conditioner, satellite TV and bathrooms are available on luxury ships provide catering services and have cabins for 2 or 4 persons. Departure: 5:30 pm every day, boarding 15 minutes before departure; Distance: 150 km

Normally one can buy a ticket easily at Suzhou Steamship Pier, 2 hours before departure. But in the tourist season advanced booking is necessary.

Ticket Price:

Double cabin on Wuyue: 168–208 yuan / person; four-person cabin: 128 yuan / person

Double cabin on Paradise: 150 yuan / person; four-person cabin: 98 yuan / person

Double cabin on Hanshan: 110 yuan / person; four-person cabin: 86 yuan / person

Suzhou Steamship Pier Ticket Office: 200 m east of the northern end of the Renmin Bridge;

Tel: (0512) 6520 6681

Associated Ticket Office at Renmin Road: No. 1606 Renmin Road; Tel: (0512) 6729 6643

Guangqian Street Ticket Centre: Tel of Gongxiangli: (0512) 6770 6676

Accommodation

In Suzhou one can find upscale four- and five-star hotels, mid-level two- and three-star ones, and low-cost youth hostels as well.

Nanlin Hotel

Address: No. 20 Gunxiu Fang, Shiquan Street. Tel: (0512) 6519 4641. Recommended for being one of the rare garden hotels in Suzhou, the hotel has a quiet environment and is conveniently located. It takes only five minutes to walk to the Master-of-Nets Garden. Shiquan Street is well-known as a bar street, with dynamic nightlife.

Jinjiang Inn (Suzhou Liuyuan)

Address: No. 2 Liuyuan Road. Tel: (0512) 6704 1266. Recommended for being very clean and comfortable, though not luxurious and expensive. Located not far from the Linger Garden, West Garden, the Tiger Hill, and Shantang Street, most suitable for individual travellers.

Xishan Island

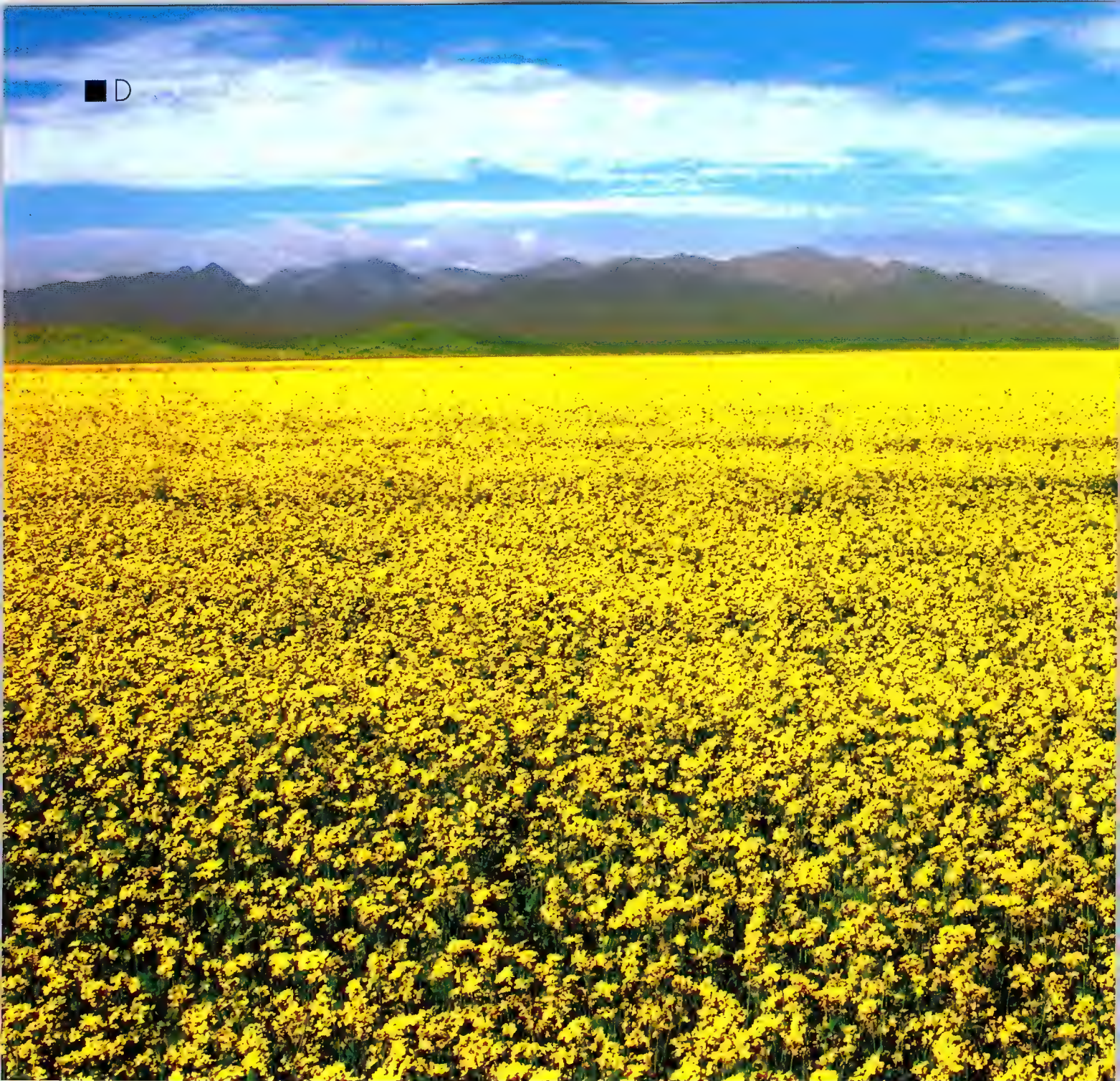
There are star-rated hotels including Taihulake Mandarin Hotel, Xishan Hotel, Silver Lake Villa, all with a good environment and nice lake views. Farmer's hostels are available around Mingyuewan and Shigong Hill scenic area. It's not a bad choice to enjoy the lake view there while tasting some homemade food. Farmer's hostels charge about 100 yuan / room. The best season is from March to May.

Guangfu Town

Most visitors go to Guangfu Town to enjoy the 'Three Whites of Lake Tai' (silver fish, white fish and white shrimps) at waterfront restaurants, but seldom live there, so there is no farmer's hostel at Guangfu. Overnight visitors in the town have to stay at the Guangfu Shanghai Hotel (110 yuan / standard room).

Shopping

Biluochun tea leaves, the silver fish, white fish and white shrimps from Lake Tai, Suzhou embroidery, Taohuawu woodcut New Year pictures, Suzhou fans, etc.



A Long Journey to Qilian Mountains

Photos by Wang Wenming, Wang Wenlin and Wang Yifei Article by Wang Wenming

The Qilian Mountains located between Gansu and Qinghai provinces have nurtured the Hexi Corridor (a historical part of the Northern Silk Road) with its snow and enormous glaciers. Thanks to the rich water sources, many fertile oases have survived along the passage; thus the Silk Road was maintained and the local residents in Hexi have prospered. It can be said that, without the Qilian Mountains there would be no Hexi Corridor; and without the Hexi Corridor there would be no Silk Road.



Rapeseed field at the foot of the Qilian Mountains

The Qilian Mountains were involved in many historical events, for example, the Han Dynasty's (206 B.C. — 220 A.D.) conquest of the Xiongnu people (a nomadic tribe from Central Asia) and Zhang Qian's (195 B.C. — 114 B.C.) visit to Xiyu (literally meaning the West Region, it refers to Xinjiang and part of Central Asia in the Han and Tang dynasties) as an imperial envoy. What make the mountains so special? What other unknown stories happened deep in those mountains?

Stretching over 1,000 km from east to west, the Qilian Mountains is average 4,000 m high above sea level. Qilian, meaning 'Heavenly Mountains' in the Xiongnu language, was where the Qiang people resided in the past. It bordered the Yueshi people's (an ancient ethnic group) territory along the Hexi Corridor.

In the sixth year of Emperor Gaozu's reign of the Han Dynasty, the Yueshi people were attacked by the Xiongnu. Later, most of them migrated westwards to Yili in Xinjiang; a small group moved to the Qilian Mountains and lived together with the Qiang people. Gradually they integrated with the Qiang, Tibetan and Han people. Nowadays, the villagers inhabiting in the Qilian Mountains are the descendents of these mixed people.

Beginning Our Journey with Liangzhou Fine Wine

Wuwei in Gansu Province, the first important town along the Hexi Corridor, is the place from where many famous lyrics came. Drinking Liangzhou fine wine and chanting the poems about frontiers along the way, we travelled over 1,000 km to the Qilian Mountains via seven counties and one city in Gansu and Qinghai provinces. We enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the Gobi desert, grasslands, snow-capped mountains, stone valleys, pastures, military horse farms, ancient battlefields, as well as different minorities' folk customs.

Mid-summer in July, is the prime time for the Hexi Corridor; given adequate rainfall, the grass and grains will be sufficient for the entire next year.

Just like the other counties in the Hexi Corridor, Yongchang County also has a majestic bell tower in the centre of the county seat, which demonstrates its significant status in history.

Yongchang, previously known as Li, has an interesting background. Around 50 B.C., Roman crusaders surrendered to the Han Dynasty after they were defeated on the Pamirs during their eastern expedition. They migrated many times and finally the remaining 2,000 people settled down at the foot of the Qilian Mountains, south of Yongchang along the Hexi Corridor. They changed their names, married the local residents and lived there ever since. The Han Dynasty government



specially set up an administrative region called 'Li' in Yongchang for them.

Having visited the bell and drum towers and the Li Roman people's statues, we continued going west. At an intersection, our car turned southward to the mountainous area. Luckily, the road was very smooth. After a few small villages, we saw a vast farmland. Further up was boundless grassland in which the Shandan Military Horse Farm is based.

The military horse farm covers about 2,000 sq km. It began to be used as a military horse

farm since the Han Dynasty. Called the Damaying (Big Horse Camp) Pasture back then, it was later elevated to the status of an official base for raising military horses by the imperial court. When modern weapons were still unheard of, mounted warriors were the most powerful forces on the battlefields.

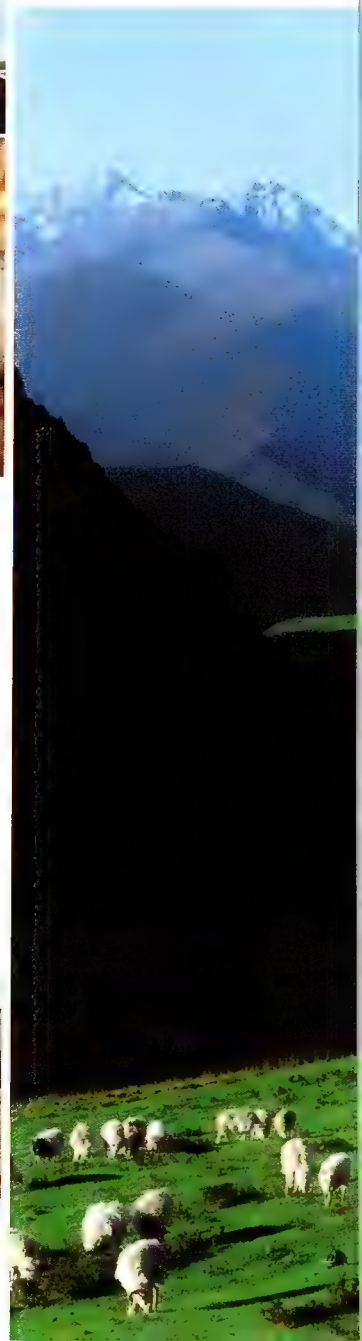
Without the Qilian Mountains, Women's Beauty Is Fading

People who have never been to the Qilian Mountains will be amazed by the following

1. A wheat-threshing floor at the foot of the Rouge Mountain. It's harvest time.

2. The stone statues of the ancient Romans of Li at the south gate of Yongchang, facing at the Qilian Mountains.

3. The mix of the red earth and Koudan herb of the Rouge Mountain was made into rouge and used by the Xiongnu women. When the Xiongnu people lost their power over the Rouge Mountain, they mourned in a poem that the loss of the mountain made their women lose the colour on their faces.



description of scenery: 'Mountains are covered by snow all year round and snow in June is not unusual.' There is a north-south mountain facing the Qilian Peak, called the Rouge Mountain in ancient times and the Dahuang (Great Yellow) Mountain today. This mountain produces a kind of herb named 'Koudan' and reddish brown dirt. A mixture of these two things was made into rouge and used by Xiongnu's women; thus it started to be known as Rouge Mountain all over Xiyu.

The Rouge and Qilian mountains form a dangerous, narrow passage at Biandukou. Biandukou had always been a strategic place which different military forces fought over in each dynasty. Moreover, it is the only pass to Qinghai from the Qilian Mountains along the Hexi Corridor. The summit of this pass is covered with snow all year round; lower on the mountainside green pine trees thrive while the bottom has abundant water

and grasses. This is why it was chosen by the Han Dynasty to be an official military horse-raising base. In 121 B.C., Huo Qubing (140 — 117 B.C.), a general of the Han Dynasty, conquered the fertile Hexi Corridor which had been under the Xiongnu people's control for years. As a result, the Xiongnu people handed over these fertile mountains and grassland to the Han Dynasty unwillingly.

Several thousand years have passed, but Rouge Mountain remains the same, providing people a peaceful, harmonious land for agriculture.

A June Snowstorm Once Upon a Time

In the fifth year of the Daye reign period of the Sui Dynasty (581 — 618), Emperor Yang (569 — 618) passed by Biandukou on his west inspection tour.

At that time, the Central Plains in China suffered from constant warfare. The Turkic and Tughun

4. The ancient bell tower in Yongchang County seat.

5. The Qilian Mountains have abundant water and grass. In early Han Dynasty, they were the Xiongnu people's pasture. After Huo Qubing subjugated the Xiongnu, the Xiong people sighed that the loss of the Qilian Mountains left their domestic animals without food.





tribes rose up and occupied Hexi, blocking the Silk Road. Emperor Yang assigned army to subjugate them and reopen the Silk Road. The two tribes eventually surrendered.

In order to show people his greatness, Emperor Yang decided to embark on a tour of Hexi. The emissaries and chiefs from more than 30 states in Xiyu went to Zhangye in Gansu Province to pay homage to the emperor.

Vainglorious Emperor Yang, accompanied by several thousand mounted warriors, travelled a long distance to Zhangye to show Xiyu people the imperial greatness and power. Unexpectedly, when they were approaching the 4,000-m Qilian Mountain pass, they were caught in a June blizzard. More than half of his attendants were frozen to death, leaving dead bodies scattered around the valley.

However, Emperor Yang insisted in requiring the officials, residents and beautiful women from Ganzhou and Liangzhou to dress up for welcoming his procession at Biandukou with singing and dancing performances. Just imagine how thousands of people and carriages lined up dozens of km on both sides of the street to pay homage to the emperor. What an excessive scene!

After Biandukou, fields of crops were everywhere. The breathtakingly beautiful pasture attracted us to slow down for a longer stay. Up ahead was the 3,800-m Ebao Peak, from which one can have a spectacular view of the ancient town of Ebao at the foot of the peak. The town looked small like a miniature. Far into the distance was Mount Da which stands opposite the Lenglong Ling (Cold Dragon Peak). In between the two mountains lies the east-west Qilian Prairie. The view was just too amazing to be described in words.

The Ancient Town of Ebao

The ancient town of Ebao is a hub of transportation leading to the Hexi Corridor, and was also a strategic military base in ancient times. About 72 km away from the Qilian County seat, this ancient town has retained part of its original earthen wall, which stands across the Babao (Eight Jewels) River today. The broken wall serves as a witness to a historical cruel slaughter. The cruel part of Emperor Yang's story is that after he occupied the Tuguhun tribe's territory, some defeated Tuguhun generals and soldiers were trapped and slaughtered in Ebao. The massacre lasted for three days, and it was so brutal that the

1. Ebao County was a halt along the ancient Silk Road.

2. The ancient town of Ebao's remains have been preserved well. There is no trace of that cruel and tragic slaughter in the Sui Dynasty. Today it is used as a temporary sheep-pen.

3. The Arou Temple is fairly famous in Qilian County. The gilded Buddhist pagodas in front of the temple are rarely seen elsewhere.

Babao River was dyed red by blood.

The road that connects Ebao and Qilian is very smooth and spacious. The river valley was covered with rape flowers and various wild flowers like a vast 'sea of flowers'. Clusters of red-and-white flowers highlighted the valley. As they resemble round steamed buns, they were given the name of 'steamed bun flower', while Tibetans call it 'Gesang'.



The Golden Buddhist Pagodas in the Arou Temple

Then we went around a mountain slope suddenly when the sky radiated a few sunrays onto a temple. To the west of the temple there were eight, shining Tibetan-style Buddhist pagodas. Unlike those in other temples on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which are usually white and come in eight, these ones are gilded. They glistened in the sunset, demanding veneration.

The temple was the Great Temple of Arou, 21 km away from the Qilian County seat. It got its name from the prefecture of Arou nearby. Flanked by the Babao River and the Gongbai Jialong Mountain, the Arou Temple is quite famous among the Tibetan Buddhist temples in the region of Haibei in Qinghai Province. Every year various ceremonies and rituals are held here. In front of the temple huge expanse of rape flowers grew. They filled the air with a pleasant aroma.

Located 286 km away from Xining, capital city of Qinghai Province, and standing at 2,787 m high, Qilian County is encircled by mountains, with only two exits. One of them leads to Kangtsa and Reshui in Qinghai and the other one connects the path where we came from. The county seat is close to the Babao River ('Babao' means forest







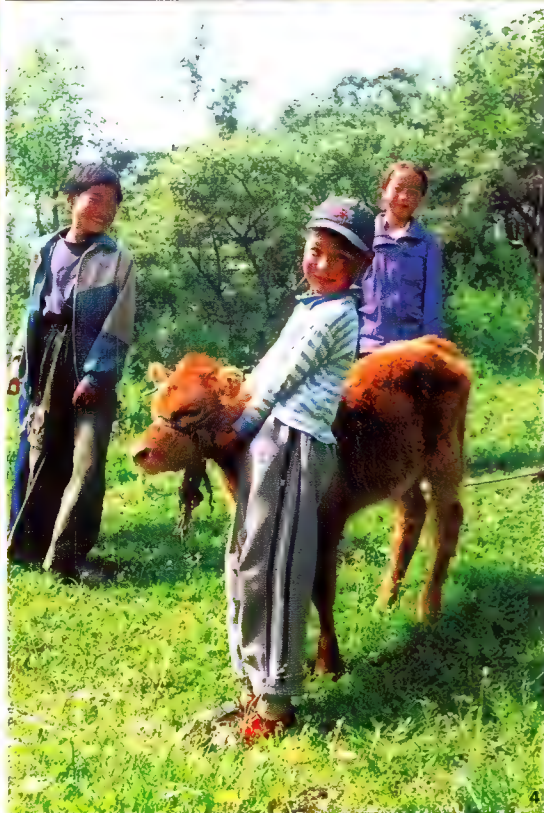
1. Villages in Menyuan are surrounded by golden flowers.

2. On the way to the prefecture of Arou in Qilian you can see the spectacular 'sea of Gesang flowers'.

3. The Datong River running through the Qilian mountainous areas is the borderline between Qinghai and Gansu provinces.

4. Cattle are the Qinghai country boys' playmates.

5. May is when the sheep give birth. Sheep represent hope to the villagers.



in Tibetan) and is not that big, with a population around 30,000.

It was cloudy when we set to Kangtsa as planned. In about 5 km, the Niuxin (Oxheart) Mountain appeared on our left. The mountain slope was covered by golden rape flowers. Then we continued eastward to Menyuan along the route from where we came the day before and soon passed by the ancient town of Ebao. Like the other remote areas, this place also has pool tables, motorcycles and beef noodles. To get to our next stop Qingshizui from Ebao, we had to climb over the 3,800-m Qingyang (Green Goat) Mountain.

Breathtaking Sea of Flowers

After climbing over the Qingyang Mountain pass, another huge rape field dotted with wild pink flowers opened up before us. Shortly, we arrived at Qingshizui. Even more rape flowers were displayed. I assumed that the size of this rape field must be measured by millions of acres instead of hundreds. The local residents built a platform on a mound in the middle of the 'sea of flowers' for the tourists, and charged 20 yuan per person. Standing there, one can have a panoramic view of



the beautiful yellow flowers.

Qingshizui, 24 km away from Menyuan, is a three-way intersection. One way leads to Menyuan; the other way which was chaotic with bustling cars and horses runs over Mount Da and goes to Xining. Menyuan has always been a producing centre for rapeseeds in Qinghai and entire northwestern China. Even international merchants travel here to purchase rapeseeds.

The winding Datong River formed by melting snow from the Qilian Mountain nourishes the majority of the population in Qinghai and Gansu provinces. We drove towards Huzhu County along the riverside road from Menyuan. On both sides of the road were boundless rape flowers. Entered the Datong river valley, we even saw pine trees.

Huzhu's 'Hua'er' Folk Singing

Tianshankou is more than 60 km from Huzhu County. There is one dangerous section called '12 Turns' on this road, with 12 S-shaped bends. From the bottom to this section, the road suddenly rises up 1,000 m. Here cars have to floor the gas to get through this section without a stall. Once stalled, it would be very hard to start up again.

Huzhu (a short name for the Huzhu Tu Autonomous County), 36 km away from Xining, is concentrated with the Tu and Hui people. The county seat is busy and tidy. It is famous for the barley wine and the 'Hua'er (flower)' folk singing. Hua'er, as a popular form of folk singing in Qinghai, Gansu and Ningxia, has existed for several thousand years. The songs mostly have themes of daily life and love. People sing beautiful folk songs in the field or play them in the audio and video stores. These folk songs, with touching, melodious music, passionate lyrics and fervent confessions of love, demonstrate the Tu people's sincere character and passion for life.



Danxia Landform Hidden Deep in the Valley

Heading across the Datong River, in the Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County in Gansu Province, we saw the Danxia landform (formed from a kind of reddish sandstone which has been eroded over time into a series of mountains surrounded by precipitous cliffs and many unusual rock formations). Clouds gathered and dispersed from time to time, brightening up or shadowing the Danxia mountains, together with reddish brown cliffs and green farmland, that define this northern Chinese countryside as a unique, delicate scenic area.

Deep in the tranquil 'Three Gorges' of Tianzhu, we saw that birches and grasses thrived, with clear streams gurgling through. We sat on the soft grass, eating sweet melons and enjoying the carefree fun of nature. Finally it was time to say goodbye to the mountains, streams, trees, flowers, birds and other natural things. When we passed by the Wuqiao (Dark Sheath) Peak which the Great Wall straddles, we met very thick fog. At dusk, we saw the grand south city tower.



Translated by Nicole Ouyang

1. The Je Tsongkhapa Buddha in the Tiantang Temple of Tianzhu is said to be the biggest interior wooden statue of Buddha in China known so far. More than 4,000 volumes of Tibetan Buddhist scriptures are kept inside the statue.

2. Every summer a huge horse race is held on the grassland in Tianzhu.

3. The Wuqiao Peak at the east end of the Qilian Mountains was a strategic place that all military forces fought over. The Great Wall stretches over top of it.

4. The herdsmen are waiting for business by the west river around the Shandong Army Horse Farm.



Travel Tips

Air

The most convenient way to go to the Qilian Mountains is to take the route from Lanzhou, capital city of Gansu Province, or Xining, capital city of Qinghai Province.

Flights from Shenzhen or Guangzhou to Lanzhou depart every day. There are also flights from these two cities to Xining, but not every day.

The highest-class accommodation in Lanzhou and Xining is four-star. The double rooms in hotels under three stars usually cost about 100–400 yuan per night.

Highway

The transportation going into the Qilian Mountains include long-distance shuttle buses, taxis and tour buses. When you arrive at Lanzhou or Xining, you can take shuttle buses at the long-distance bus stations to any intended destination. The ticket price ranges from 20–30 yuan per 100 km.

Zhangye Long-distance Bus Station:

Zhangye—Xining (via Minle, Biandukou, Ebao, Qingshizui, the Dashan Mountain, Datong County)

Zhangye—Qilian (via Minle, Biandukou, Ebao and Arou)

Zhangye—Shandan Army Horse Farm

Chartered Cars

If you want to travel on your own, you need to rent a car or pay a travel agency to arrange a car for you. The prices to hire a car from the travel agency vary a lot in high and low seasons. In Lanzhou and Xining, to rent a Santana costs about 400 yuan per day while in Wuwei or other cities in the Hexi Corridor the same brand car can be rented at about 300 yuan and in Xiali at 200 yuan per day (excluding the toll fee).

Recommended Itineraries

Three to four days makes for a very tight tour to the Qilian Mountains. If you are a photography fan, you better arrange five to seven days.

1. Lanzhou in Gansu—Tianzhu—Tiantang Temple—Huzhu in Qinghai (accommodation)—Menyuan—Qilian (accommodation)—Ebao—Biandukou in Gansu—Shandan Army Horse Farm—Zhangye (accommodation)—Wuwei—Lanzhou.

2. Lanzhou in Gansu—Wuwei—Yongchang—Shandan Army Horse Farm (accommodation)—Ebao in Qinghai—Qilian (accommodation)—Ebao—Qingshizui—Menyuan—Huzhu (accommodation)—Tiantang Temple in Gansu—Tianzhu—Lanzhou.

3. Xining in Qinghai—Mount Da—Menyuan—Qilian (accommodation)—Arou Temple—Ebao—Biandukou in Gansu—Rouge Mountain—Zhangye (accommodation)—Great Wall in Shandan—Yongchang—Wuwei (accommodation)—Lanzhou.

Tickets

The Qilian Mountains extend nearly 1,000 km from east to west. There is a path to the mountains in each direction and they don't charge for admission. Only the areas that have been classified as national forest or grassland parks require an entrance fee.

Shimengou Grassland Park of Tianzhu in Gansu: 20 yuan (only from May to October; free admission at other times)

Beishan National Forest Park in Qinghai: 28 yuan

Qingshizui Platform of Viewing Flowers in Menyuan of Qinghai: 20 yuan (only during the rape blossom time)

Folk Holiday Village in Huzhu County of Qinghai: 60 yuan

Tiantang Temple in Tianzhu of Gansu: 20 yuan

Travel Advice

Clothes: As the Qilian Mountains are in the cold alpine area, it is common to see people wearing a leather jacket in the morning and thin silk shirt at noon; and sometimes there is snowstorm in summer. You'll likely experience four different seasons in one day; therefore, it's recommended to bring warm hiking clothes that breathe well, slip-resistant shoes and sunglasses (note that the sunlight is very strong on high mountains).

Food: The food here is mostly beef and lamb. Restaurant menus usually include beef/lamb soup, hand-grabbed beef/lamb, big-plate chicken, big-plate stir-fried vegetables, beef noodles, fried noodles and lamb flour slices. After all, people here eat much more meat than vegetables. It's also necessary to drink some alcohol with your meal as it can help digest and detoxify uncooked meat.

In addition, garlic is a must to keep your stomach and intestines functioning normally.

During the fruit season, remember not to overeat fruit.

Accommodation: The surrounding cities all provide convenient accommodation. Double rooms in the hotels under three stars cost between 100–300 yuan per night. The reception houses and hotels at the county level range from 50–200 yuan; while the village inns only cost 20–50 yuan per person (with shared washrooms, no showers). Independent travellers on a budget can choose the hotels attached to local governments such as police station's reception houses. They are cheap, clean and safe.

In winter, warmth is the first priority for a hotel. It's best to stay in a hotel that can provide enough heat. The rooms heated by coal stoves have a potential danger of gas leakage.

Transportation: The villagers are honest and straightforward most of the time, but they can be rude sometimes. Before you agree to accept their services, you'd better settle the price with them in case they change it on the way. If an unpleasant situation happens, you should compromise.

If you plan to charter a taxi, it's highly suggested that you check the leasing market first and then choose a good-quality car. And you must prepare enough food and water as there is no certainty about when you'll be supplied with food and water again on the way.

Don't be surprised by the people who stop you to check your identity. Another thing, if you run across those from the epidemic prevention department who want to give you vaccine for plague or other epidemic diseases, refuse it! There are two reasons for this: first, there is no guarantee that the needles are sterile; second, think about how unpleasant it would be for the vaccine to stay in your body for a long time. Plus, a travel agency's employees have little chance of being infected by animals such as marmots, so you don't have to worry about getting infected.

There are five mountains on the way to the Qilian Mountains that exceed 3,800 m, Ebao, Jingyang, Dashan, the 12 Turns and Mount Wutai in Tianzhu. If you have no health problems, you won't have any serious reaction to the high altitude; just take some medicine for a cold and diarrhoea. For those who have high blood pressure or heart disease must be very careful and need to get a doctor's approval.



Travelling to the Potential World Heritage Sites in Jiangxi

Photos and Article by Mickey Ching

Although Mount Lushan is the only place in Jiangxi Province that is listed on the World Cultural and Natural Heritage List, there are numerous other sights of interest that are worth that title. In July, 2008, a new batch of world heritage sites will be announced in the coming UNESCO session. Hopefully, Sanqingshan, Wuyuan and Guifeng in Jiangxi will be selected.





1. The natural landscape of Wuyuan.

2. Villagers sell pieces of camphor wood, which repels insects and deodorises.

3. A young merchant plying his trade.

Starting in the morning from Nanchang City, the capital city of Jiangxi, we arrived at Wuyuan at noon. Located at the boundary of Jiangxi and Anhui provinces, Wuyuan used to be within the jurisdiction of Huizhou (now Anhui province). The Chinese character of 'Wu' (婺) can be divided into three characters separately: spear (矛), art (文), female (女). Maybe women in Wuyuan are well versed in both civil and martial arts. Whether it's true or not, one thing that is certain is that there are marvelous landscapes there.

Visit Villages in Wuyuan

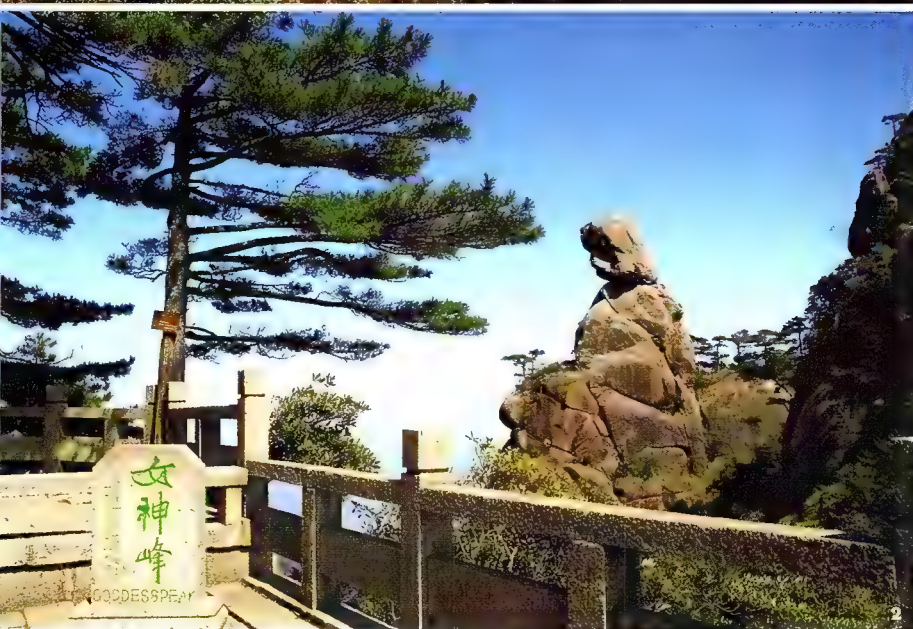
Wuyuan is a mountainous area with picture-postcard fields, brooks and mansions, as well as the most beautiful ancient villages. In Likeng Village, the oldest and longest bridge of ancient Huizhou-Caihongqiao (Rainbow Bridge) is well preserved. You can visit the ancient mansions of officials of the Ming and Qing dynasties and see the ancient ancestral temple of the Yu family in Wangkou Village. Compared with the famous villages in south Anhui Province, like Hongcun and Xidi, Wuyuan is far more tranquil and pure.

The villages in Wuyuan are built along the hills, with creeks and rapids running through them. It is extremely refreshing to see yellow rape flowers, luxuriant camphor trees and ginkgo trees in the fields. There are ancient drama stages,

bridges and mansions of architectural significance. The silver carp and vegetables in front of the doors of the villagers are precious material for photographers. Wuyuan is proud not only of its natural beauty, but also of its glorious past. Known as 'Qufu of South China' (Qufu is the hometown of Confucius in Shandong Province) and 'Scholars' Town', Wuyuan is home to some of China's great men, including Zhu Xi, a Confucian master in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279), and Zhan Tianyou, China's first railway engineer. According to historical records, 550 Wuyuan people passed the civil imperial examinations — examinations to select government officials in feudal dynasties, to become Palace Graduates, and 2,665 held various posts in the feudal government. Nowadays, it's common to see young people here running their own businesses to support their families. Kids play in the streets, and laugh happily with the tourists.

The Sacred Sanqingshan Mountain

It is a two-hour drive from Wuyuan to Sanqingshan Mountain, which is located on the boundary of Yushan and Dexing County. Its three main peaks are Peak Yujing, Peak Yuxu and Peak Yuhua, standing like three Taoists overlooking the splendor of nature. Yujing is the highest peak with an altitude of 1,817 metres. Sanqingshan has been nominated for World Cultural and Natural



1. It takes 38 minutes to take the south cableway. You can take your time to appreciate the surrounding scenery.

2. Spring Goddess Peak, looks more like a frog to me.

3. The most stunning scenery in Guifeng—a vertical stairway. There is a grand view up there.

4. Guifeng is typical of this mountain landscape. The fantastical Danxia landscape is just like the magic cartoon world of Hayao Miyazaki.

Heritage in 2008. Some people call it 'the sister of Huangshan Mountain'. However, the scenery at Sanqingshan Mountain is quite different from the precipices of Huangshan Mountain. More than 1.4 billion years' of geologic movement fashioned unique peaks and valleys, forming its famous granite hill forest. In the meantime, Sanqingshan preserves lots of Taoism relics. In the era of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317 — 420), Gehong, a famous doctor and alchemist and Minister Li retreated to Sanqingshan to distill elixirs. The ruins of the well that they dug and stoves that they used to make pills of immortality are still well preserved.

It was a clear and sunny day when I arrived there, quite different from the mysterious vision I had

in my mind with mist overhanging the mountains and valleys. I chose the south cableway to go uphill, and it took 38 minutes to get to The Villa of Heaven's Gate. It's a challenging ride — one has to jump into the two-seat carriage just seconds before it slides out. There are two routes for sight-seeing: the south line and east line. The south line begins from 'View Platform' and runs to its core site, Nanqingyuan, with scenery like Yixiantian (Way to Heaven), Yutai (Jade Platform) and Guanritai (Sun Platform), Spring Goddess, Peach and Penguin and Giant Python on its way. Scenic spots on this line are close to each other. You can also hire a sedan-chair if you don't want to walk. It takes about one hour to visit all these sights of interest. The charge is 300 yuan for a round trip and 100 yuan plus for west coast sight-seeing.

7 Minutes by the New Cableway ◯

Jinsha passenger cableway, going straight to Nanqingyuan, was opened on 8 March. The length of the cable is 2,670 metres and the vertical cableway height is 889.5 metres. The carriage can hold 8 people. It only takes about 7 minutes, 31 minutes fewer than the south cableway. What's more, the accommodation problem on the mountain has now been solved. New hotels have been built near the cableway station, like Tiantang Hotel and Shuiyun Villa.

The grotesque peaks of the Mountain attract many tourists. My favorite one is Giant Python Peak. Some say that it looks like the new International Finance Centre in Hong Kong, but I thought it was more like my walking stick! When we passed Spring Goddess Peak, I took it to look more like a giant stone frog crouching there! It seems that everyone has a saying about the unique shapes of those peaks. I suggest appreciating them with your own imagination and don't be influenced by others. In May, when azalea bloom everywhere, it will become a sea of flowers.

Guifeng— World of Grotesque Stones and Peaks ◯


Ninety-eight km from Sanqingshan Mountain is Guifeng (turtle peaks) Scenic Area of Geyang County. It is known for its almost 1,000 turtle-shaped stones and peaks. It was much loved by the famous Ming Dynasty scholar, Xu Xiake, who composed several poems about Guifeng. Formed in the cretaceous era 80~135 million years ago, Guifeng is a typical Danxia landform.

You can visit Sishenggu Valley, where the TV series, *Pilgrimage to the West* was shot. The most stunning spot is the vertical stairway. If you are brave enough to climb up, a vast panorama of



Map of Attractions in Jiangxi Province



Guifeng will open out before your eyes: Chicken and Eagle, Old Man Peak, Buddhist Nun. I imagined the magical world of Hayao Miyazaki, the Japanese animator and director. Some of the peaks are just like his cartoon drawings in *Totoro* and *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*. 

Translated by Huang He

How to get to Jiangxi...

Hong Kong-Nanchang

Transportation: China Eastern Airlines has flights from Shenzhen to Nanchang departing at 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm every day. Direct flights from Hong Kong to Nanchang on Tuesday and Thursday, or Friday and Sunday at 11:20 am.

Accommodation:

Nanchang Jiangxi Hotel: 368 Bayi Road, Nanchang City

Gloria Plaza Hotel: 39 Yanjiangbei Road, Nanchang City

Kyoto Kokusai Hotel: 8 Xuri Road, Shangrao County

Huadu Resort: 66-68 Daihu Road, Shangrao City

Getting to Wuyuan

Transportation: It takes 4 hours by bus from Nanchang City to Wuyuan County.

Tickets for villages in Wuyuan: Likeng (李坑) 30 yuan/person; Wangkou 25 yuan/person; Caihongqiao 20 yuan/person; Jiangwan 50 yuan/person; Xiaoqi 20 yuan/person; Likeng (理坑) 20 yuan/person.

Accommodation: Peasant inns are cheap, but conditions are relatively bad because they're basically just old houses belonging to the villagers. There are plenty of hotels in Ziyang Town, Wuyuan County like Wuyuan Mingzhu Hotel and Jiangwan Hotel.

Sanqingshan Mountain

Transportation: 3 hours' drive on Li-Wen Highway from Nanchang Airport; 3 hours from Jingdezhen Town (the famous Chinese porcelain town); Scenic Area is ahead along the Sanqingshan Tour Road at Yushan Exit, 311 Highway.

Tickets: 150 yuan/person

Accommodation:

Tiantang Hotel (four-star): 200 metres away from Jinsha passenger cableway station Tel.:(793)2558 001

Shuiyun Villa (four-star): East Jinsha service area of Sanqingshan Tel.:(793) 8261 818

Jinxiu Villa: Pingxiqiaotou, south scenic area of Sanqingshan Tel.:(793) 2188 088

Sanqingshan Holiday Hotel: Shuangxi, outside the south scenic area of Sanqingshan Tel.:(793) 2181 186

Cableway fee: 115 yuan for south cableway; 110 yuan for Jinsha cableway

Guifeng

Transportation: 9 km away from Geyang County

Tickets: 80 yuan /person

Accommodation: Guifeng Villa, inside the scenic area

Suggested route

D1 Hong Kong — Nanchang, city sight-seeing, stay in Nanchang

D2 Nanchang — Wuyuan — Sanqingshan, stay at the foot of Sanqingshan Mountain

D3 Sanqingshan Mountain — Shangrao City, stay in Shangrao

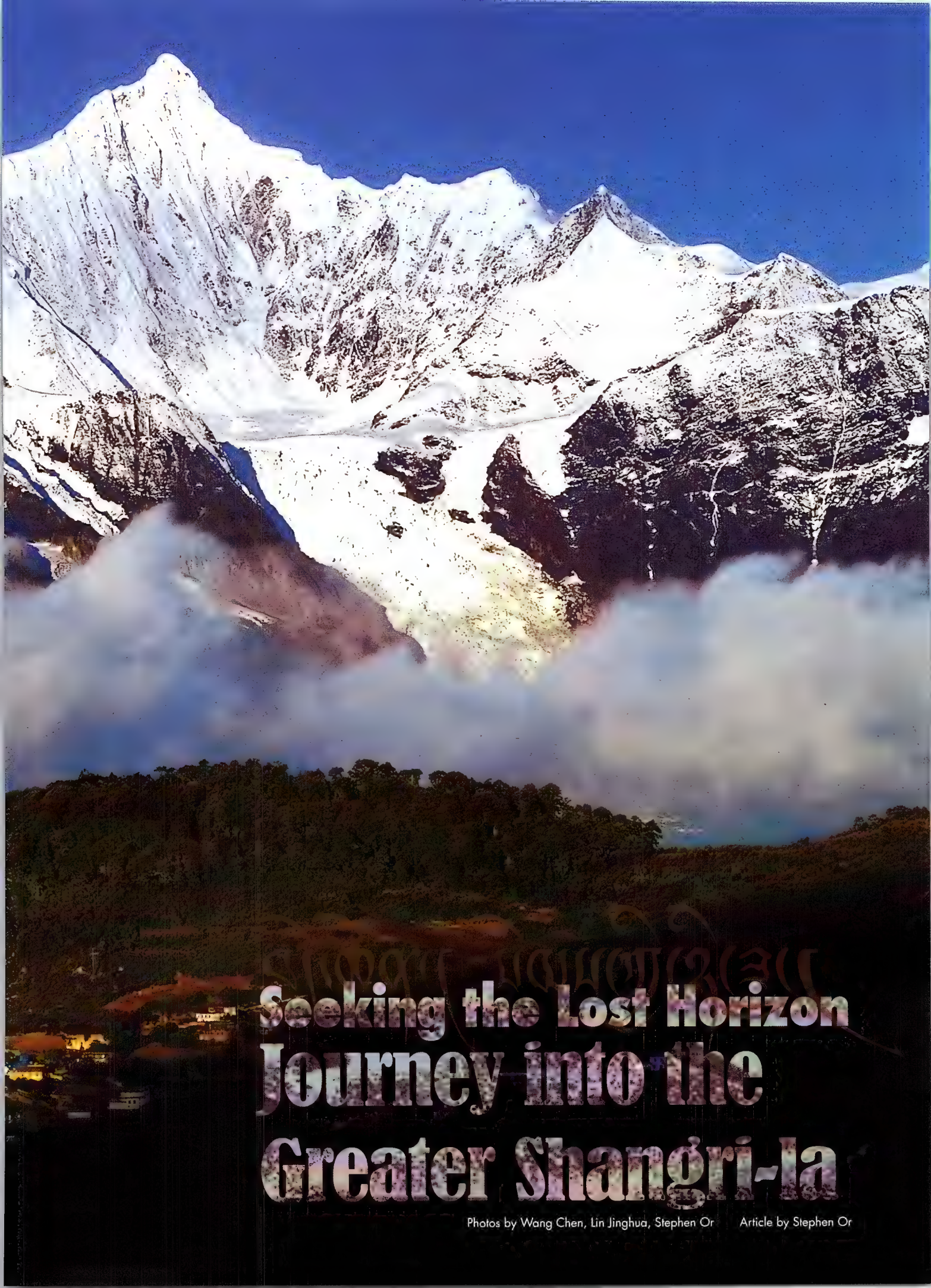
D4 Shangrao — Guifeng — Nanchang

D5 Nanchang — Hong Kong



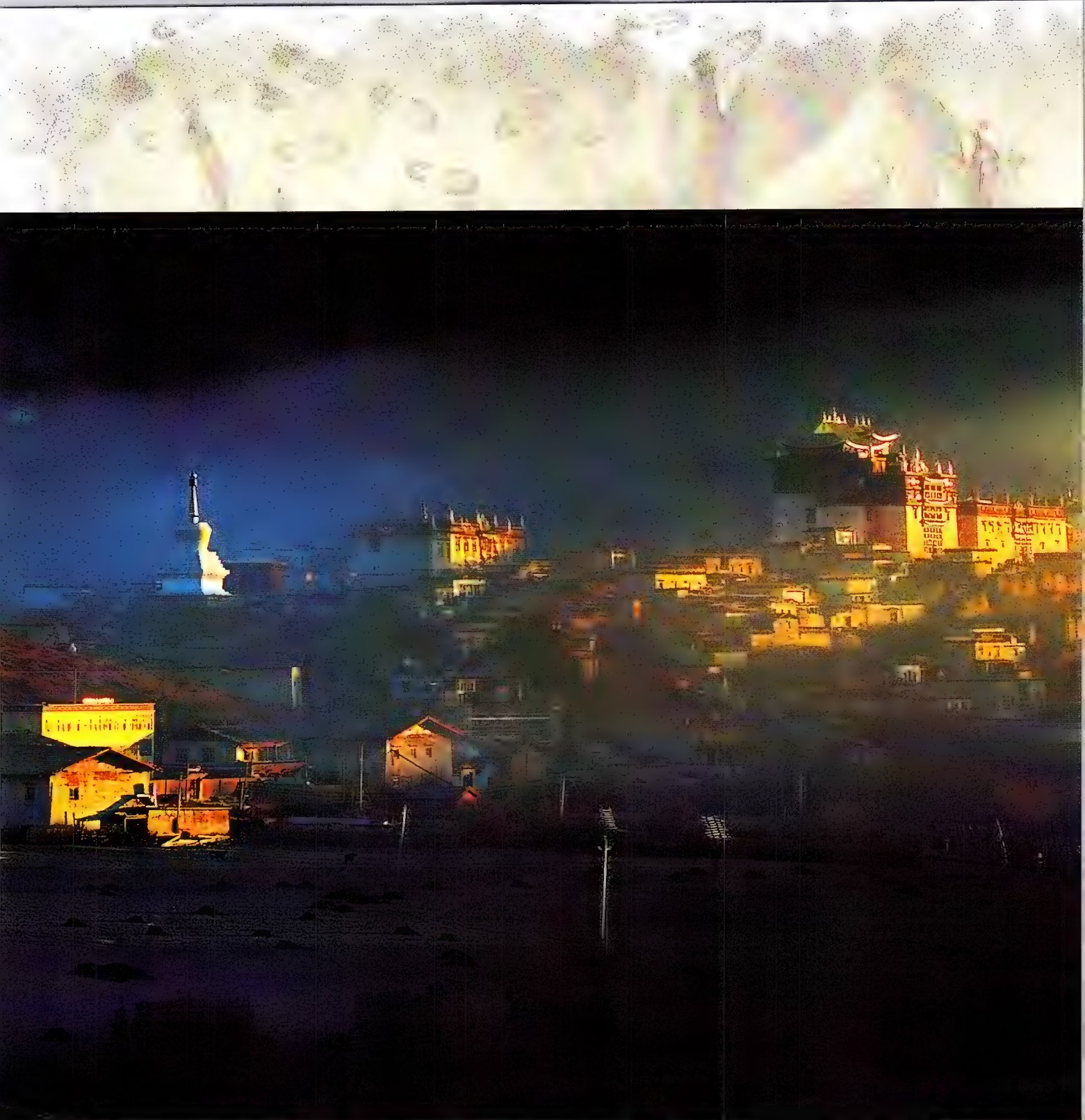


Kaweibo Peak of Meili Snow Mountain. (by Xie Guanghui)



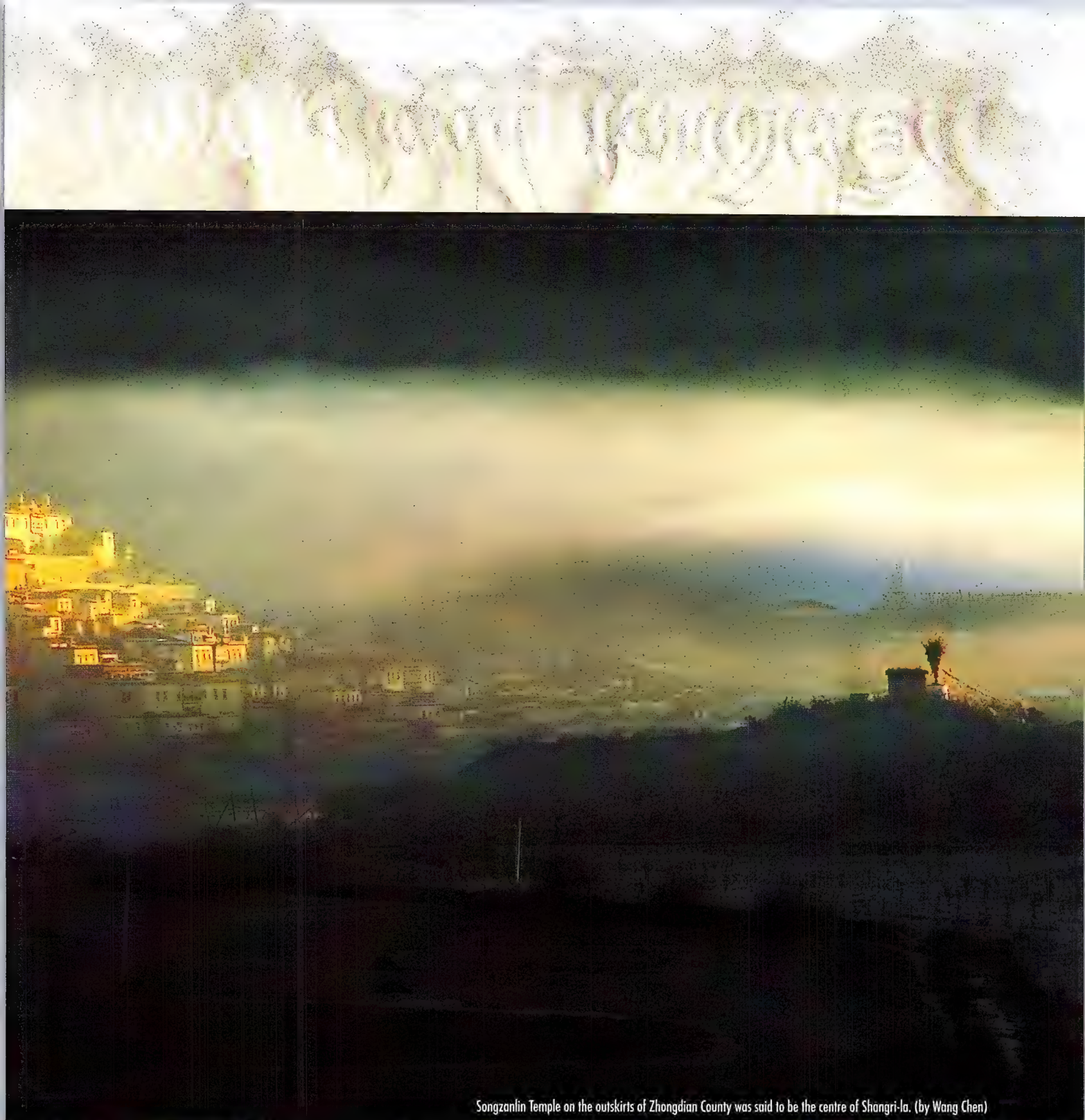
Seeking the Lost Horizon Journey into the Greater Shangri-la

Photos by Wang Chen, Lin Jinghua, Stephen Or Article by Stephen Or



Shangri-la has soaring pyramid-like snow peaks, plunging valleys, majestic lamaseries, fairytale-like villages and colourful exotic folk customs.

But where exactly is this place which has been a contentious issue for more than a century? Shangri-la — a paradise on earth as depicted by English writer James Hilton in his novel *Lost Horizon*, stirs the imagination with its remoteness and mystery, sparking a rush among fans to discover its exact whereabouts. In China,



Songzanlin Temple on the outskirts of Zhongdian County was said to be the centre of Shangri-la. (by Wang Chen)

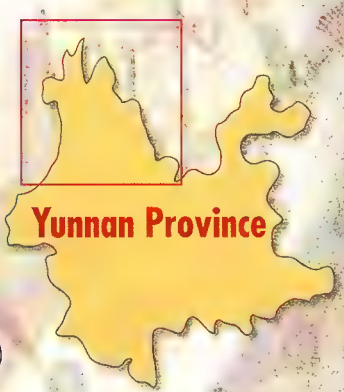
Yunnan Province is home to a county named after Shangri-la, while Sichuan has a village so named and even neighbouring countries including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan want a piece of the action by claiming Shangri-La as their own.

To solve the conundrum, our reporters, armed with a copy of *Lost Horizon*, climbed mountains, traversed valleys and visited locals for an in-depth look at northwestern Yunnan Province as described in the book, in a quest for the long-lost horizon...



From Dêqên's Wulong (Mist-heavy) Peak one can overlook Kawa Kargo Mountain. (by Xie Guanghui)

VANDERBILT





Zhongdian

The Shangri-la found on the map

For many years, Shangri-la has been a remote and elusive land; no one is exactly sure where it is. The juncture of Sichuan, Yunnan Province and Tibetan Autonomous Region as mentioned in the book, is claimed as being the area of the real Shangri-la; for example, Zhongdian county of Yunnan's Dêqên Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture changed its name to Shangri-la County; Sichuan Daocheng's Riwa Township changed its name to Shangri-la; Sichuan's Muli Tibetan Autonomous County calls itself the 'last Shangri-la'; Bing Zhongluo calls itself the true Shangri-la, near to Yunnan's Nujiang River Lisu Autonomous Prefecture, even neighbouring countries like Ladakh in India's Kashmir, Pakistan's Hunza, Nepal and Bhutan, have all raced to prove that Shangri-la is within their borders.

James Hilton passed away almost a half a century ago, leaving behind the puzzle for following generations to solve; I took a copy of the *Lost Horizon*, searching for Shangri-la from its illustrations and descriptions. The first stop was Yunnan Province, also the most likely candidate, such that its name was changed to Shangri-la County, formerly known as Zhongdian County.

As the plane took off, we left behind the hectic city of the south and its lush greenery. Close to our descent, we heard that near Zhongdian lies Yunnan's largest lamasery, Songzanlin Temple. It is almost exactly the same as that described in the book; a plane was forced to land in China's Tibetan region, with a lamasery nearby. Could Songzanlin temple be the one mentioned, the centre of Shangri-la?

Splendid Songzanlin Temple

Our first sighting of the Songzanlin temple felt exactly as described by Conway. It had been cloudy all the way from the airport to Zhongdian County, the capital of Dêqên Prefecture. But miraculously, as I got close to the temple's



"A group of coloured pavilions clung to the mountainside with none of the grim deliberation of a Rhineland castle, but rather with the chance delicacy of flower petals impaled upon a crag. It was superb and exquisite. An austere emotion carried the eye upward from milk-blue roofs to the gray rock bastion above, tremendous as the Wetterhorn above Grindelwald."

— excerpt from *Lost Horizon*

entrance, sunlight poured from between the clouds, as clouds shifted, rays reflected from the foot of the mountain to mid-hill Songzanlin Temple and made the temple roof blaze with gold. I marvelled at the clear blue sky, just a moment ago it had been filled with dark clouds.

This lamasery was built in Qing Dynasty's Kangxi reign (1674 — 1722), the main building is a five-storey Tibetan watchtower, laid with gold-plated copper tiles, the flying buttresses and roofs decorated with lions, dragons, Chinese unicorn. But it was unlike the landscaped garden style Lama temple in the novel, with varying sizes of pavilions and a lotus filled pond. Lamas at the temple told us, the present Songzanlin Temple was rebuilt after 1983, whether the former one was

a marriage of Tibetan architecture and Chinese classical landscaped garden design, remains a mystery.

What is the Greater Shangri-la?

In contrast to counties that claim they are Shangri-la, like Zhongdian, Daocheng, Greater Shangri-la refers to the Hengduan Mountain Ranges delta region where Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet intersect. It extends to Tibet's Nyinhchi area to the west, east to Sichuan's Luding, northwards to the northernmost tip of Sichuan, Ruo'ergai and Shiqu County, including Guoluo Prefecture of Qinghai Province and the southernmost part of Gansu Province, and south as far as Yunnan's Lijiang region.

1. Each year during the Tibetan New Year, Songzanlin Temple holds Displaying Buddha ceremonies. (by Lin Jinghua)

2. Lama resting by a copper Buddha statue in Songzanlin Temple. (by Xie Guanghui)





Ancient Shambhala City

Dukezong

In Zhongdian's version in Tibetan, there is a word that is pronounced nearly the same as 'Shangri-la', meaning 'sun and moon of the heart', a version of Tibetan utopia. Dukezong, the ancient

city at the heart of Zhongdian, meaning 'white moon city' in Tibetan, used to form the famous 'sun and moon cities' of Tibet along with Niwangzong, the 'Sun city', built by Lijiang's Mu's Tusi on the

banks of the Naizi River while occupying Zhongdian. Small paths radiate from the centre of town, the scriptures library at the foot of the Dagui Mountain. To defend against invasion, there are also eight castles in the shape of eight lotus flower petals, said to represent the ideal in Tibetan Buddhism — Shambhala.

While this city is nowhere near as famed as Lijiang, nor does it boast a rich heritage like Dali, it has been able to remain relatively untouched because it is relatively unknown. Many of the

"The atmosphere, in fact, was Chinese rather than specifically Tibetan; and this in itself gave Conway an agreeable sensation of being at home."



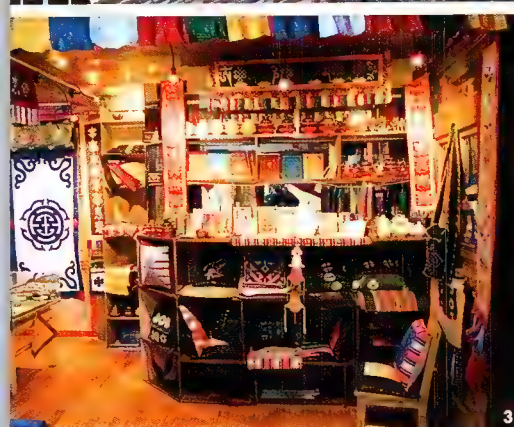
inhabitants of the ancient city have moved into the new city, now those who live in the ancient city are old people and adventure seeking tourists. Crumbled city walls, roofs overgrown with weeds, deserted streets, are all part of the special ambience of this city. The old city has some newly opened teahouses and wine bars, mostly like those in *Lost Horizon*, hung with Tibetan paper lanterns, decorated with rugs and a few Tibetan wooden sculptures. In the dim lighting, a soft Chopin piece can be heard, making tourists from afar feel relaxed and at home, just like Conway.

I sat at a teahouse in Dukezong frequented by locals and the owner told me that the teahouse used to be a rest stop for horse caravans, where horsemen

would meet and enquire about the road and traffic conditions. Now the teahouse is still a meeting point for Tibetans, many of whom are children of the legendary horse caravans. There, I met Mr. Zhaxi, probably the most common Tibetan name. He told me that this is not Shangri-la, and that the real Shangri-la lies in Dêqên, with its Lego-land like settlements, breathtakingly beautiful snowy mountains, Lamaseries and Catholic churches.

Kingdom of Shambhala

According to Tibetan Buddhist teachings, Shambhala is the ultimate state of 'Pure Land', or 'Eden, Utopia, Paradise' in modern parlance. The scriptures say the kingdom of Shambhala lies hidden in the snow mountains, surrounded by two formidable layers of mountains; it comprises eight lotus petal shaped regions. The soaring peak in the centre is the Kalaba Palace. In the legends, Shambhala people are supremely intelligent. They are tall and well-built, imbued with powers through a secret crevice others can't see, the earth navel that allows them to connect with the outside.



1. Most houses in Dukezong ancient city have wooden roofs. (by Stephen Or)

2. The scriptures library at the city's centre combines Tibetan and Han architectural styles. (by Stephen Or)

3. Most bars in the ancient city are decorated in Tibetan style, just like that depicted by the book. (by Stephen Or)

4. Bars hung with yellow lanterns made of Tibetan paper create a quiet and romantic ambience. (by Stephen Or)



Toy-like Houses

The old man Zhaxi led me to a Tibetan driver Zhishi Qilin who had been travelling the Zhongdian to Mount Kawa Karpo (also named Meili Snow Mountain) route for over ten years. We chatted and he told me he had been driving cargo trucks since he was sixteen, later he got married he came back to Shangri-la to transport tourists.

We exited Zhongdian new town and entered a sea of 'fire'. Flame like Gelsemium plants shone brilliantly on the grasslands, it is flame red from its roots, branches, leaves to flowers, striking and splendid to look at. Along the way I kept asking the driver to stop so we could take photos. With one exclamation 'our house is prettier than this!' Driver Qilin managed

to pour cold water on our photographic fever.

Qilin's home is in Nixi Village, just beside the No.214 National Road, with a few natural villages below and deeply embraced by mountains, about 30 kilometres from Zhongdian. Peering down from the road, we could just see the outline of a cluster of Tibetan houses



that looked like toy houses drifting amidst clouds. The sun reflected shadows of the clouds and valleys in the river basin, shifting up and down like the most fantastic stage lighting. This sort of light usually has photography fans in raptures, the so called 'Jesus light'. Tibetan village entrances are usually marked by a white pagoda and at dusk and dawn, the devout Tibetans circle it chanting prayers with wafting incense smoke. It is a serene and harmonious sight to behold.

Nixi's Tibetan houses are different to most Tibetan residences, even though they're both in Tibetan style, they also have elements from the Han, Naxi and Bai architectures. Materials are sourced locally, the roof is made of bark, walls of rammed earth and white painted plaster.

"The vast encircling massif made perfect contrast with the tiny lawns and weedless gardens, the painted teahouses by the stream, and the frivolously toy-like houses. The inhabitants seemed to him a very successful blend of Chinese and Tibetan."

Qilin told me that he built this house with timber he himself hauled from the mountains. The two-storey house had gable walls sloped on both sides and painted with auspicious symbols for prosperity and longevity. Downstairs is for feed storage and raising animals, upstairs is a large hall where guests are entertained. In the middle is a large Tibetan iron stove where water can be boiled and which also provides heating, to the side is a fireplace that allows cooking.

Because local winters can last as long as six months, there are few windows, just a small one and the skylight above the stove, so the room is not that well lit. There is a sutra hall and water tank, which is a very attractive spot. The sutra hall is often the most lavishly decorated place in a Tibetan home, quite a lot of work and thought goes into the Buddha altar against the wall, and every home has a slightly different sutra hall.

Gold-rich Jinsha River

We waved goodbye to the fairytale house of our Tibetan driver and set off along the Jinsha River towards Kawa Karpo Mountain. The Shangri-la as described in *Lost Horizon* amalgamates the best and newest of the world's offerings, mostly an endless supply of gold. There are no large goldmines around Dêqên Prefecture, the only object that fits is Jinsha River which flows through the region, also known as the upper reaches of the Yangtze River.

Jinsha River (river of golden sand) can trace its sources to Geladandong Snow Mountain in Qinghai's Tanggula (also Dongla) Ranges, the river does its name justice. As the prehistoric movement of the Earth's crust exposed the surface, the gold deposits along the river became loose and flowed into the water, precipitating through the sand to form golden sand. According to a 1939 study by the Geology Bureau, there were more than 3,000 people in Jinsha River's Yongsheng region mining for gold, the annual production was about 50 kilograms.

The best vantage point to see Jinsha River is at the lookout point on the way to Dêqên, it allows you to take in the entire river bend from top to bottom. Jinsha River valley is set quite low and in the hundred or so kilometres from Zhongdian to Benzilan, the altitude drops sharply, by over one kilometres, creating an arid and hot micro-climate. The roaring Jinsha River constantly washes both sides of the valley, until the water is as muddied as the Yellow River, but one shouldn't underestimate the water because of the colour, you never know how much gold may be buried there.



1. Quaint houses scattered among fields like toys at Nixi Village. (by Lin Jinghua)

2. Our cheerful Tibetan driver Zhishi Qilin. (by Stephen Or)

3. Tibetan fireplaces are for entertaining guests. (by Lin Jinghua)



The Far Valley of Blue Moon

This paragraph depicts the journey Conway makes before entering Shangri-la, crossing a valley that passes through forests, over snow mountains, encountering unpredictable weather.

When Conway gazed upon 'Blue Moon Valley' from near Shangri-la Lamasery, he had a sensation 'of having reached at last some place that was an end, a finality'. It's easy to imagine how arduous the trek

was. Hilton stressed that the valley means 'blue moon' in the local dialect (in English 'Blue moon' means that which is almost impossible or extremely rare), so it's not hard to figure out his deeper meaning. Shangri-la may be heaven on earth, but it's not for the faint-hearted, this mystical 'almost unreachable' paradise.

In the interests of attracting more tourism, Yunnan's Dêqên Prefecture government found several experts to prove that Birang Valley, about a hundred kilometres out of Zhongdian County, is the Blue Moon Valley in the book, they even changed the names to Shang and Rila valleys. Even though the valley is more than 80 kilometres long, with rock wall vertical drops of over 3 kilometres, it's also said the bottom of the valley allows access to the snow mountain in Yading, Daocheng, similar to that mentioned in the book; but it just doesn't feel like the Blue Moon Valley, more like an over-eager attempt to rake in tourism revenue.

Benzilan — Where Han and Tibet meet

"He was careful that none of the porters bringing books and art treasures should ever approach too closely; he made them leave their burdens a day's



2

"About a couple of miles along the valley the ascent grew steeper, but by this time the sun was overclouded and a silvery mist obscured the view. Thunder and avalanches resounded from the snowfields above; the air took chill, and then, with the sudden changefulness of mountain regions, became bitterly cold. A flurry of wind and sleet drove up, drenching the party and adding immeasurably to their discomfort; even Conway felt at one moment that it would be impossible to go much further."

journey outside, to be fetched afterwards by our valley folk themselves."

From this we can gather Shangri-la is about one day's distance from where horse caravans arrive. James Hilton also added in some red herrings at the end of the chapter by suggesting that it lay 1,100 miles (1,770 kilometres) from Sichuan's Daocheng. By this calculation, Shangri-la should be near Kashmir at the border of India and Tibet! But in that region the other features of the location don't fit the descriptions of Shangri-la. Aside from the writer's meanderings, of all the areas where tea-transporting horse caravans are active, a few towns sound like they come straight from the book, which are the ones that are one day's distance away from Karakal Snow Mountain such as Benzilan and Dêqên's Shengping Township. These two places were both on the Tea Horse Ancient Route that horse caravans must pass through, they were the rest stops before roads were built.

The first stop in Dêqên is Benzilan once a hub for the Tea Horse Ancient Route along the Jinsha River. From here, cross Jinsha River and you'll get to Sichuan's Derong, keep going up to reach Daocheng, but the two places are only several hundred kilometres apart, still some stretch from the '1,100 mile distance' mentioned. After roads were built, there were less horse caravans and Benzilan lost its former glory. Now the Yunnan Tibet Road passes through the town, so restaurants have opened up along the highway, with a smattering of workshops making copperware and jewellery. Today's Benzilan is more like a highway rest area. Most vehicles from Zhongdian stop here, fill up with water or

for passengers to have a meal, Benzilan is once again a stop on the tourism route, just like it used to be on the Tea Horse Ancient Route, what's changed is that the customers are now tourists, not horsemen.

A Temple Where Monks and Nuns Co-habit

Not far from Benzilan, we saw Dongzhulin Temple at the foot of the mountain. This Gelu Sect temple was built in the 6th year of Qing Dynasty's Kangxi reign (1667), and ranks with Songzanlin Temple among the top 13 temples of the Kang Region, the number of Lamas at the temple totals more than 700, with a sutra hall that can hold over 2,000. But this temple, as well as Songzanlin Temple were both rebuilt on new sites in the 1980s. The old Dongzhulin Temple is on a hill at the side of the road, and is now used as a residence for female ascetics

from Sichuan, Yunnan, Tibet. The quiet old Dongzhulin Temple may be perfect for spiritual practice, but it also means being locked away from tourism dollars.

Over the Baimang Snow Mountain

After Dongzhulin Temple, the car began to make its way over the Baimang Snow Mountain. It is a journey of under a hundred kilometres, the road extends to the highest point on the Yunnan-Tibet Road, the Baimang Snow Mountain Pass at 4,292 metres in altitude. The higher you climb, the colder it becomes, don't be surprised to see snow in June, while strong winds and hailstones are commonplace. It was bright and sunny when we were below the mountain, at the pass it began to snow and when we came off the mountain there was heavy fog, we really experienced 'different seasons within one day'. Once past Baimang, we arrived in Dêqên Township in good weather, the journey takes 2~3 hours, but before the roads opened, horse caravans took at least a day, as the novel details getting in and out of Shangri-la's Blue Moon Valley.

1. The original basis for Blue Moon Valley — Zhongdian Shangri-La Canyon. (by Tsering Puntsok)

2&3. Zhongdian has the highest concentration of Tibetans in Yunnan Province, here life still keeps to Tibetan traditions and customs, each temple has its own interesting religious activities. (by Wang Chen)





Mysterious Kawa Karpo Mountain

As a symbol of Shangri-la the Kawa Karpo Mountain, plays a pivotal role in the worldwide quest for Shangri-la. Kawa Karpo (Meili in Chinese Pinyin transliteration) Snow Mountain's main peak, Kawagebo, is known by some local Tibetans as Kalakaer, this sounds just like the Kara Kal Peak mentioned in the book, which is described as an exquisite pyramid, which matches the appearance of Kawagebo Peak. Especially when the first ray of sunlight strikes the snow mountain, bathing it in brilliant gold, like the pyramid described in the book, no wonder so many believe Zhongdian is the original basis for Shangri-la.

Avenging Avalanches

When Conway saw the Kara

Kal Mountain, aside from feeling apprehension, his first reaction was wonder, he imagined the immense stress of snow and glacier against which the rock functioned as a gigantic retaining wall. Someday, perhaps the whole mountain would split, and half of Kara Kal's icy splendour may come toppling into the valley. Conway's concerns are valid, because Kawagebo Peak on the Mount Kawa Karpo may be only 6,740 metres in height, dwarfed by Mount Everest, which is 2,108 metres higher, but the unique geographic conditions, the continental cold air travelling southwards, blocked by the massive Kawa Karpo Mountain, condensing into thick fog and heavy snow, makes the weather extremely

volatile causing avalanches almost everyday, it is a much more challenging conquest than Mount Everest.

To local Tibetans, Kawa Karpo Mountain reigns supreme among all eight sacred Tibetan mountains, and must not be desecrated. The main peak Kawagebo means 'god of snow mountains' in Tibetan, and is a protector of Nyingma Sect branch Kagyuba. On the 3rd of January, 1991, a mountain climbing expedition team led by 6 Chinese and 11 Japanese climbers met avalanches while they camped on mid-mountain, 17 climbers disappeared. It wasn't until 7 years later that part of their remains were discovered at Mingyong Glacier Valley, four kilometres away, near Mingyong

Village. Even though at the time it wasn't the avalanche season, the snow still buried those who sought to conquer the mystical mountain. Local folklore says avalanches are a result of the mighty Kawagebo god shrugging his shoulders, to punish those who attempt to mock the god's powers.

There are two places to see what Conway thought was the world's most beautiful mountain peak. One is Wunongding Peak (thick fog peak), the other is Feilai Temple. Located 10 kilometres from Dêqên County, Feilai Temple is not just a good lookout point, but also a must for Tibetan pilgrims going



2

"Soaring into the gap, and magnificent in the full shimmer of moonlight, appeared what he took to be the loveliest mountain on earth,... Framed in the pale triangle ahead, the mountain showed again, gray at first, then silver, then pink as the earliest sun rays caught the summit."

to Kawa Karpo Mountain. Feilai Temple, known as 'Nakazhaxi' (transliteration) in Tibetan, roughly means Buddha saying 'I flew in from beyond the nine heavens'. The legend suggests that the temple's Sakyamuni Buddha statue flew here from faraway Lhasa, a rare case where the Buddha came first, then the temple. Feilai Temple is very small, a little like the Han style Buddhist temple, which seems especially tiny facing the mighty Kawa Karpo. But one shouldn't belittle the temple because of its size, if you want a glimpse of the true Kawa Karpo, it's said that you must burn incense and pray to the gods at the temple.

Shangri-la is just Ahead

We came out of Feilai Temple and encountered a family of Tibetans carrying out full-body prostrations along the Yunnan Tibet Highway to encircle and worship the magical Kawagebo Peak. The father led the way, followed by the mother, then elder son, daughter and finally the sight that moved us most, the youngest son only five years old, following behind. His face was deeply tanned, marked by a dribbling nose,

but years of full-body prostrations had left his forehead calloused, unfitting for his age. He wore a special costume for the prostrations; a small tyre hung on him, a bottle of water on his back. He would take one step forward, raise both hands, close them, lay down, kowtow, get up, then he would repeat, without stopping and resting, dedicated to measuring the path of pilgrimage with his timid body. Qilin stopped the car on the roadside and we quietly watched them passing without a word. He took out all his spare change for the young pilgrim (as is the custom in Tibetan areas), seeing this the other passengers in the vehicle were moved to tears and speechlessly they emptied their pockets of all their change for the boy.

1. Kawa Karpo Snow Mountain's main peak — Kawagebo, not only does its Tibetan name sound similar to the Kara Kal mentioned, but also looks very similar in pyramid-shape. (by Liu Weixiong)

2. The 5-year-old Tibetan boy — making full-body prostrations along the Yunnan-Tibet Highway to worship Buddha in Lhasa. (by Stephen Or)

3. Dêqên's Dongzhulin Temple holds the grandest Buddha dancing ceremony among all temples in Zhongdian's Tibetan region. (by Wang Chen)



3



Red Wine Brewed by Highland Barley

The wine mentioned in the novel and drunk by Tibetans, is not a figment of the writer's imagination. These 'foreign' goods had entered areas of northwest Yunnan at around 1910. Even now, if you travel along Lancang River and Nujiang River areas, occasionally you will see Catholic and Christian churches in tiny villages, the wine is used for baptisms with red wine symbolising the blood of Jesus Christ at his crucifixion. However in the

remote Tibetan areas of Zhongdian, the high altitude means no grapes, Tibetan pilgrims use highland barley as the raw material, combined with winemaking skills from foreign missionaries, to make a unique highland barley wine, that even Conway may have sampled!

French Wine-making Methods

The first time we learned of Shangri-la Tibetan red wine, I was as surprised as Conway, red wine at such an altitude, with such low temperatures? When Meili Memories Bar owner took out a bottle of wine for us to taste, we thought it was from Great Wall or Zhangyu, those two famous Chinese vineyards. The wine was ruby coloured, transparent and richly sweet, unlike red wine sold in the stores. 'This is red wine that Dêqên's Cizhong Village Tibetans make for themselves, according to methods taught from foreign missionaries years ago,' he

said. The owner took out another bottle to try. This red wine was less sweet, but full bodied and mellow, like wine but with a difference that was hard to pinpoint. 'This is made from highland barley,' he said. Red wine from highland barley? We asked ourselves. The only grape producing region in Zhongdian is Dêqên's Lancang River Canyon, other highland areas substitute purple highland barley for grapes, fermenting it to make highland barley red wine. The quirky winemaking method made me desire a visit, the owner told me Cizhong is not only known for wine producing, but also a French church with over a hundred years' history.

Driving from Feilai Temple to Cizhong Village, our vehicle spent most of the time going around the back of Kawa Karpo Snow Mountain. Here the climate is warm and dry, with long hours of sunshine, very suitable for planting grapes. Cizhong Village is situated in the Lancang River Canyon, not far up from Cizhong Bridge. The entire village is spread out along the river, with just under 100 families from different ethnic groups living together; mainly Tibetans, but also Nu, Lisu and Naxi people. The villagers



2

are mostly Catholic, with a small group of Tibetan Buddhists and Dongba believers. We wandered a while in the village without finding the church, so we asked a girl working in the vineyard, she told us we were going in the wrong direction and invited us home for a meal. It turns out that the girl's family — the Wu's, were the caretakers of the church, what a lucky find! Wu's house is about 2 kilometres from the church, situated next to a primary school, surrounded by vineyards.

Lonely Gatekeeper

The man who watched over the church was a shabbily dressed old Tibetan. He sat on the church steps sunning himself. Elder Wu took me aside and told me that he used to be the attendant for the Cizhong Church priest, also said to be an excellent chef in French cuisine. In the 1970s, he became the gatekeeper. I would have loved to find out more about the past from him for example, who brought the rose honey grapes to China? Who thought of using highland barley to make red wine? Sadly, he told nothing, I don't know whether he didn't speak Mandarin, or just that he didn't want to answer my questions. He just stared at the far off valleys, pondering the vineyards in silence.

"wine and fruit were now on offer, having been unpacked by the marching party; stocky Tibetans in sheepskins, fur hats, and yak-skin boots. The wine had a pleasant flavour, not unlike a good hock..."

Century-old Catholic Church

We followed Elder Wu into the century old church, the door lintel was inscribed in Latin, Tibetan and Chinese, 'We hope all people of the world come here'. Cizhong Church was first built in 1875 and what is standing now is the rebuilt version from 1905, a century has passed, the church has kept its French architectural style intact. As we entered we came to a four-storey bell tower, followed by a hall that can fit over a hundred people and its lectern, overlooked by stained glass windows and ceilings.

To the right of the church is a vineyard built by missionaries and at the same time they spread the good word, they also brought French grapes and ancient winemaking techniques. This unremarkable vineyard produces superb wine, the best of the Yunnan dry reds and is the real source of Shangri-la Tibetan wine. There are a few trees in the garden, under which are two graves topped with crosses, there are also tombstones but only one with a name. The crooked and

shaky engraving showed the Chinese name of a French priest, Wu Xudong who died in 1921. The other tombstone was blank, said to belong to a foreign priest who died in the 40s, leaving behind not even a name, in those war-torn days.

Unfortunately this church is not a model of religious cohesiveness as described in the *Lost Horizon*. In fact, this church is a product of religious conflict, after the Adunzi (now Dêqên) Incident, due to anti foreign religion sentiment of the 19th century, lamas from Dêqên's Lama temple and more than ten thousand civilians burnt the church and killed the French missionaries. In compensation, the church was rebuilt. Near Cizhong Church is the Cigu Church, built in 1848.

1. Western Catholic church and the Mani Stones of Tibetan Buddhism, co-existing in peace at Cizhong Village. (by Stephen Or)

2. These grapes help make Cizhong red wine — rose honey grapes from France. (by Stephen Or)

3. After more than a hundred years, the Cizhong Church interiors are still as good as new, the frescoes are perfectly preserved. (by Stephen Or)

4. French missionaries rest in peace in the Cizhong Church vineyard. (by Stephen Or)





The Missionaries' Route

"The track consisted of a traverse cut along the flank of a rock wall whose height above them the mist obscured. The path was scarcely more than two feet wide in places, and the manner in which the bearers manoeuvred the chair at such points drew his admiration."

The months of July and August are the best time to cross Biluo Snow Mountain and the early missionaries followed this route to spread the word to Tibet. We planned to follow in their footsteps over the mountains to Dimaluo Village, but heavy snow made the mountain inaccessible. So we hired a local farm truck, drove southwards along Lancang River for over 400 kilometres to Yongping, then detoured to Liuku, township of Nujiang Prefecture. This was followed by

driving northwards along Nujiang River to Gongshan. Our journey in the shape of a large detour was over 800 kilometres long and soon we were just one mountain away, but getting over it took two days by car; it usually only takes two days on foot for the local Tibetans.

The car travelled southward along the Lancang River, the province road from Weixi to Dêqên; although only two years old is already looking the worse for wear, signs of landslides and mudslides were

everywhere. Along the Lancang River the banks are deep valleys and the scenery en-route was as breathtakingly beautiful as the road condition was breathtakingly appalling. One careless move could throw us into the river, adding a definite fear factor to our journey. Looking out from the car window, Lancang River seemed just like a silk ribbon compared to the towering cliffs. The driver of the farm truck sped along the winding roads, while we sat rigidly upright, fearing that

any sudden movement could cause the truck to lose balance and tumble into the river.

After rocking along for hours, we finally arrived at our destination, Dimaluo Village, this used to be the final stop on the missionaries' route from Cizhong, past Biluo Snow Mountain to the Nujiang River area. It is also the entry point for all foreign religions into the region. This missionaries' route started in 1902, when French missionaries settled in Cizhong they were determined to climb over the snow mountains whatever the testing conditions, to spread God's word.

Travelling along the river banks, one often sees cross topped buildings among villages. The locals believe churches made of concrete and tiles look better and more modern, so many of the century

old churches were demolished. Dimaluo and Baihanluo have kept their old churches. For more than a hundred years, the fact that these small churches situated less than 20 kilometres apart could remain untouched is due to the isolation and poor transportation. To find these two churches nestled in the mountains, we walked for more than two hours on the hilly paths.

The traverse cut that Hilton's novel *Lost Horizon* talks about is like a well-formed road compared to these paths. In fact they are hardly even paths, just tracks made by Tibetans herders. It's difficult to imagine how the missionaries had come to such a remote area to preach. The first roads in Nujiang River Prefecture weren't built until the 1960s, so over a hundred years ago it must have been quite a

primitive environment. We wondered about the forces that motivated them to come to preach in this isolation, what kept them here for life and even after their souls departed the earth, they still asked the villagers to bury them in the church gardens. Now along the banks of the Nujiang river canyon, as long as there are villages, you can find churches left by the French missionaries where they are still being used by villagers for gatherings and church services.

1. Far-off Biluo Snow Mountain; more than a hundred years ago, foreign missionaries had to climb over this mountain to get into the Nujiang River region to preach. (by Lin Jinghua)

2. The Z-shaped climbing path: part of the missionaries' route, locals virtually sprint along it. (by Wang Chen)

3. Chinese-western style Dimaluo Church. (by Stephen Or)

4. On the missionaries' route — Dimaluo Church and foreign missionaries' graves. (by Stephen Or)





The Real Shangri-la

Bingzhongluo

Zhongdian may have won naming rights for itself as 'Shangri-la' with its Shangri-la County. But Hengduan Mountain Ranges and other places are not giving up the fight. Especially, Nujiang River Prefecture's Bingzhongluo, which has decided to brand itself as the 'real Shangri-la'.

Nujiang River Prefecture claims

that the reference for Kara Kal Snow Mountain in *Lost Horizon* is Kawakabu Peak on Gaoligong Mountain. But the peak is not covered in snow, nor is the mountain pyramid in shape, it is a stretch to call it Kara Kal Snow Mountain. While the pronunciations are similar, I'm more inclined to believe Kawa Karpo Snow Mountain's main peak, Kawagebo is the

real Kara Kal. Zhongdian's Kawagebo Peak is only 80 kilometres from Nujiang River's Bingzhongluo in direct distance, separated by just one mountain. There is speculation a direct road from Bingzhongluo to Diqing Prefecture's Dêqên would be built next year, which would greatly shorten the distance to Kawa Karpo.

The similarity of Bingzhongluo to Shangri-la is mainly from its geography. Bingzhongluo, like Shangri-la, is also surrounded by numerous snow mountains. To its left, Kawakabu Peak at an altitude of 5,216 metres, to its southeast at 4,609 metres high is Cijiaomoxi Peak, to the right past Nujiang River is Biluo Snow



Mountain. This mountain basin has an area of 5 square kilometres, about the size of the Shangri-la planting area described in the novel, '1-5 miles in width'. Water from the mountain's melted snow continues to nourish Bingzhongluo, making it the most fertile land for growing grain.

Bingzhongluo's hills are planted with highland barley; amidst the fields are cabins made from stone slabs and wood, not quite Tibetan but not in Han-style either. Large walnut trees around the houses shelter the small houses from the sun like giant umbrellas. Streams from the snow mountain flow past every house and evaporate under the sun, wrapping the entire valley in ribbons of fog and mist. Because of the location, the fog remains for hours without dissipating, partly obscuring the outline of the pristine snow mountain behind the village, making the village float as if in a fairy tale.

Bingzhongluo comes from the Nu language, meaning 'Tibetan village'. The inhabitants of Nujiang River Prefecture are mostly Nu and Lisu people, while Bingzhongluo is a village of mostly Tibetans. This is because during the Qianlong reign (1735 — 1796) of the Qing Dynasty, Sichuan's Dêgê Lama Temple sent lamas here to build temples and preach, later 75 Tibetan families were relocated here from Weixi and Dêqên, so this became a place where the Nu people lived alongside the

"Conway could see the outline of a long valley, with rounded, sad-looking low hills on either side jet-black against the deep electric blue of the night sky."

"but for some chance-placed barrier, the whole valley would clearly have been a lake, nourished continually from the glacial heights around it. Instead of which, a few streams dribbled through to fill reservoirs and irrigate fields and plantations with a disciplined conscientiousness worthy of a sanitary engineer."

"Crops of unusual diversity grew in profusion and contiguity, with not an inch of ground untended. The whole cultivated area stretched for perhaps a dozen miles, varying in width from one to five, and though narrow, it had the luck to take sunlight at the hottest part of the day. The atmosphere, indeed, was pleasantly warm even out of the sun, though the little rivulets that watered the soil were ice-cold from the snows."

"The vast encircling massif made perfect contrast with the tiny lawns and weedless gardens, the painted teahouses by the stream, and the frivolously toy-like houses. The inhabitants seemed to him a very successful blend of Chinese and Tibetan."

Tibetans. As the location was so remote and cut off from the outside world, over the years different ethnic groups began to inter-marry. It is very common for the father to be a Tibetan, the mother to be a Nu descendent and the daughter-in-law to be from Lisu or Han families with children often speaking three or four languages.

Aside from being home to many ethnic groups, Bingzhongluo also features in a story of legend. According to the Zhongding Village elders, a plane crashed at Amoluodi Lake in the 1930s and an injured foreigner with a large nose, blonde hair and blue eyes was found. Villagers took him to Bingzhongluo's Lamasery. The foreigner told the warden that he was an Englishman flying back from India, but had to parachute when the plane malfunctioned. The Englishman lived at the Lamasery for a long time, nursing his wounds and learning the local language. Later the lamasery warden sent seven local Tibetans to accompany him from Bingzhongluo to Tibet's Chawalong. It's said that after he got to Chawalong, Tibetans took him to the border between China and India. This story sounds

amazingly similar to that which James Hilton mentioned. Are these similar geographic conditions and folk customs enough to prove that the legendary Shangri-la is in Bingzhongluo on Nujiang River?

1. The fairytale like Bingzhongluo Village, at the foot of the snow mountain. (by Lin Jinghua)

2. Villagers near Nujiang River's Shimenguan still transport goods on their own back or horseback to Tibet's Chawalong. (by Zhao Xiaying)

3. Happy Tibetan children. (by Xu Xiong)





The Last Tea Horse Ancient Route

Lost Horizon says that Shangri-la is one of the rest stops on the Tea Horse Ancient Route, most people have focused on the Kawa Karpo side, without realising that at the opposite side of the mountain there is also a rest stop on the tea horse route, also reachable in one day. And just like the novel says 'the Chinese coolies from Yunnan transfer their loads of tea to

the Tibetans.'

Earning a Livelihood from Nature — Horse Caravans

Due to its unique location, Bingzhongluo became an important hub for commerce at the northern end of the Nujiang River as well as a transit point and distribution centre on the

Yunnan-Tibet Tea Horse Ancient Route. The horse bell which has disappeared from most areas of southern Tibet, can still be heard tinkling in this far-flung place.

From here it is only 3 to 5 days to Tibet's Zayü faster than road transport, the food and groceries consumed at Tibet's Zayü County in the spring and summer seasons are brought from here. Now the Chawalong Road from Yunnan's Bingzhongluo to Tibet has been built, but plans for a road from Chawalong to Zayü is still far off. This trial road section, at only 35 metres long, is more a widened hill path than a road. Should you visit Bingzhongluo in the rainy

season, summer or autumn, you can still see hundred-horse strong caravans. These horse caravans from Tibet are just as *Lost Horizon* describes; the same well-built Tibetans who had come to pick up Conway from Shangri-la, dressed in sheepskins, wearing fur hats and shod in yak leather boots. This is China's only state owned and run, horse caravan transport company, as well as the only operating horse caravan. Their horses are not big, more like mules in size. The goods are packed in large leather bags and placed on the ground, the mules graze on roadside lawns, while the horsemen sit in groups of three or five, drinking and singing, building a fire on the roadside to keep warm, cooking on the campfire when they get hungry, sleeping on the ground in their Tibetan robes when tired. This is the horseman's lifestyle, one that is at the mercy of mother nature.

I didn't have time to follow the full route to Tibet's Zayü having to settle for the best part, from Bingzhongluo to Qiunatong, an area where the famous Chinese director Tian Zhuangzhuang shot *Delamu*, a documentary about the Tea Horse Ancient Route. In the morning, the horse caravan set off in a majestic procession from the Bingzhongluo Township Government Building, heralding

their arrival in the valleys with horse bells. Tourists mostly travel in buses along basic roads to Chaohong Bridge (an iron cable bridge), then hike their way to Qiunatong, while this does conserve energy, what you miss is the most beautiful part of the Nujiang River Canyon.

To say the scenery from Bingzhongluo to Zhongding Village is beautiful would be an understatement, on the side of the road are dense green highland barley fields, sprinkled with small huts, complemented by the emerald river. Not far ahead is a large bend, like Biluo Snow Mountain dipping a toe into the Nujiang River. This island has an elegant name, Peach Blossom Island, every year in March and April, the island turns virtually pink from a profusion of peach blossoms, while the background is a perfect counterpoint, postcard views of the far-off snow mountain.

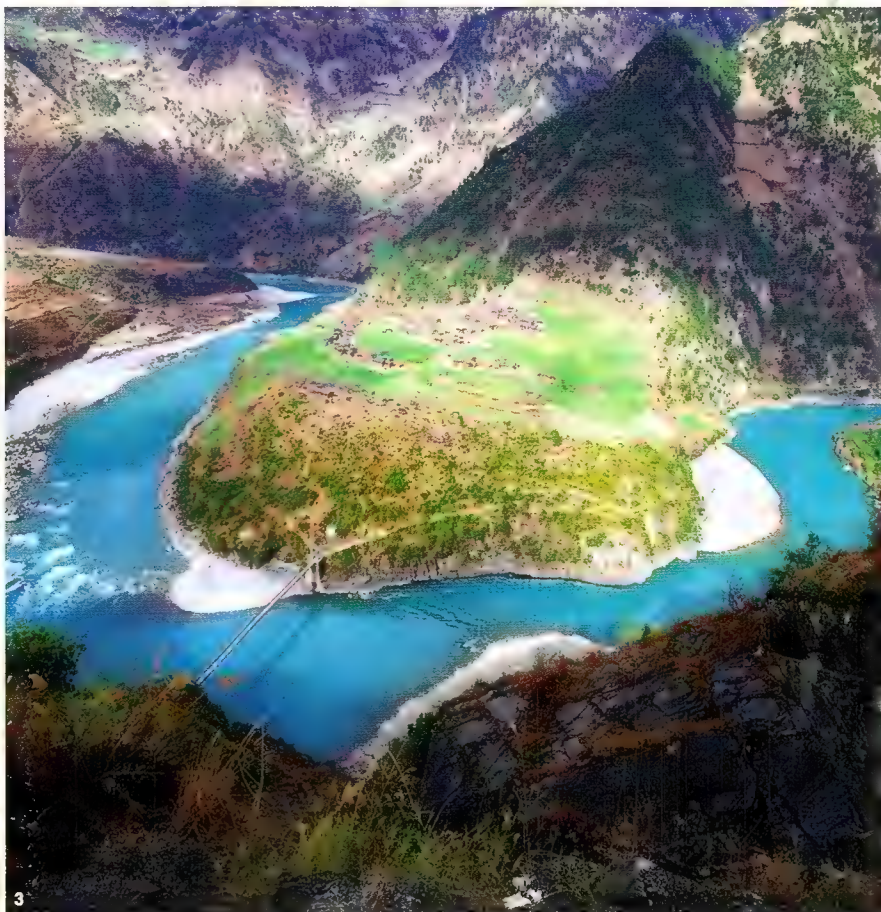
Whether it's Tibetan Buddhists' Shambhala, Tao Yuanming's (a famous Chinese Poet) source of peach springs, or James Hilton's Shangri-la, they are similar

in that they represent people's belief in a perfect world. To the nomadic Tibetans, Shambhala is their ultimate destiny, their final stop on the road to nirvana. From a perspective of the literati in an agricultural society, retreating to a 'peach spring' is a life goal. As society progressed, after the industrial revolution, Shangri-la appeared as a symbol of disillusionment toward modern society, implying the need for urbanites to escape reality and discover a spiritual destiny. At Peach Blossom Island in Nujiang River's Bingzhongluo, I found it to be very much like Tao Yuanming's Peach Springs (a retreat haven), also resembling Shangri-la from *Lost Horizon*, perhaps this is the utopia so many have written about and sought after?

1. Qiunatong to Chawalong is the only part of the Route in south-western China that still relies on horse caravans. (by Lin Jinghua)

2. Qiunatong villagers have to travel for miles to chop firewood from the mountains, the life is hard, but they are still hopeful about the future. (by Zhai Dongfeng)

3. Peach Blossom Island — situated at Nujiang River No.1 Bend. (by Lin Jinghua)





A Village where Gods Gather

The legendary Shangri-la is Eden on earth; it is also a place where multiple religions and many races can co-exist in harmony. Even though the area is dominated by Tibetan Buddhist Temples, there is room for other religions. As Chang said, just like a gem is multi-faceted, many religions are moderately true. It is about a four-kilometre walk from Peach Blossom Island to Zhongding Village, with a few dozen families along the way. While Tibetans dominate, there are also other ethnic groups, Han, Lisu, Nu, etc. They believe in an array of religions, including Tibetan Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Catholicism and Christianity, it is a religious United Nations. In the same family, the father may be a Buddhist, the

mother a Catholic, while the daughter is a Christian. As in *Lost Horizon*, different religions exist side by side.

In the village are two tall Gothic churches, re-built in 1904. Behind the church is the grave of a French missionary Ren Anshou, who built the Zhongding Church. Walking upwards from Zhongding Village lies a Tibetan Buddhism Gagyü Sect Temple — Puhua Temple, first built in 1755. It used to be the centre of power for Gongshan County but now just a basic hall remains, sparsely decorated with Buddha statues and a few piles of scriptures. On the dilapidated walls, are peeling frescoes. The Lamas here are mostly from Tibetan areas of Yunnan's Zhongdian and

Sichuan's Daocheng. What fascinated me was that the hall had a Taoist earth god sculpture. This reinforced my belief that Bingzhongluo is Shangri-la as penned by Hilton. In Zhongdian, only the historic records showed that Taoist temples once



2

existed, while in Bingzhongluo these Taoist gods are still worshipped by locals.

No far from Shimenguan is the hillside Wuli Village; to enter it, one must go around the suspension bridge, then walk 20 minutes on the mountain path along the riverbank. This riverside path is the same one in the opening shots of the movie *Delamu*, and is the one used by the horse caravans. The entire path was carved out of near vertical cliffs, so narrow only one person or one horse could pass. I finally understood the reason why when horse caravans meet each other, the one with the less valuable goods is pushed to the riverside edge in case of a fall, because there is no space on these narrow paths. We walked upwards from Chaohong Bridge along the Nujiang River and split up with the horse caravan at an intersection. They headed left to Chawalong. I headed right to Qiunatong. Before we parted, I asked the horse caravan leader a question, 'Are you the last of the horse caravans?' 'No! Many places are still without roads, even with roads, there are times when they are

"Chang explained that the temple had its own lamas, who were under loose control from Shangri-La, though not of the same order. There were also, it appeared, a Taoist and a Confucian temple further along the valley. "The jewel has facets," said the Chinese, "and it is possible that many religions are moderately true."

closed,' he replied. The horse caravan leader, having answered strode off with his crew.

Within half an hour, I began to appreciate the value of horse caravans. The road to Qiunatong may have only been completed last year and while it wasn't paved, I knew it would not be as smooth next year. The road condition worsened as we went on. In many areas the road surface had been devastated by landslides. Further ahead, half of the road foundation at the riverside had collapsed; the only way to get across was crawling on hands and knees.

Qiunatong is the northernmost village in Nujiang River Prefecture, keep going and you're in Tibet, but it takes three days to the nearest village. The place is marked by extreme quiet, as it is

surrounded by thick mountains. At the village centre is a basketball court, to the right is a Catholic church. Next to the church are two missionaries' graves, we couldn't tell where they were from, but on the tombstone were engraved 'Yanjiang County Qiunatong Village', so it seems Qiunatong Village came under Tibet rule before the Communists took over.

1. Zhongding Village has the largest Tibetan Buddhism Gagyü Sect Temple in Nujiang River Prefecture. (by Zhao Xiaying)

2. Run-down Puhua Temple even has an earth god, usually worshipped by the Han's, evidence that Bingzhongluo is a religious melting pot. (by Stephen Or)

3. This 3-storey Gothic Catholic church provides a place to worship for Zhongding villagers. (by Stephen Or)

4. During prayer, I caught the attention of a curious Nu girl. (by Stephen Or)





School who every day use the flying pulley to cross the river. Some are as young as 4 years old. Imagine flying across everyday, with the rushing and roaring river 40~50 metres below, it is enough to frighten many adults, not to mention the children. The article caused a sensation among readers, who were eager to make donations for building a bridge. On this trip to Nujiang River it was my intention to visit the school in the article, to see those students who 'fly' to school everyday.

On both sides of Nujiang River, there is a flying pulley cable every 20~30 kilometres. At school times, students take out their pulley ropes and pulleys from school bags, strap it on, give it a hard kick and 'zoom', they cross to the other side in just seconds. I asked a 6 to 7 year old girl on the flying fox whether she was scared - 'no!' came the brisk answer. To the Lisu people, the flying pulley is synonymous with courage, anyone who can't make it isn't a real Nujiang River native.

There was one doubt in my mind, is there no other way I asked? 'The nearest bridge to school is 2 kilometres away, we'd be late if we went the long way,' the girl answered. I asked her father next to me, 'Don't you worry about letting

Flying Pulley

the Way out of the Mountains

We travelled along the Nujiang River Canyon and saw a plethora of bridges and styles; cement, hanging, wooden, rope and steel cable. The most unusual is the type of bridge made from steel cables with a flying pulley, known as a flying fox to some. The cliffs on the banks are steep, the rushing water flow makes boating impossible thus, since ancient times the locals have relied on the flying pulley to cross the river and to transport

goods. Along the way, we saw locals use the flying pulley to send boxes of groceries to the other side of the river, in some cases even tying pigs to their back and although weighing over a hundred kilos they were 'flying' across the river.

There is a touching story on the internet, written by a *Southern Weekly* reporter, titled 'fly to school', about primary school students at Fugong County's Majixiang Central Primary





her go to school on the flying pulley everyday?' 'It's not about worrying, we've done this for hundreds of years, look, others go to school by the same way,' he said. To him, schooling was a must, because only education could make a difference and allow the girl to leave the mountains. Hence, the flying pulley is the first step to the girl's journey to the world.

Why not build a bridge, one might ask. Here the annual income averages less than 2,000 yuan per person, their

homes are barely furnished, aside from a black and white TV. To build a hanging bridge on the river could cost half a million yuan, an astronomical lump sum to the locals here. Rely on the government? Not likely, the county's annual fiscal revenue is just over 10 million, how many bridges can that build?

Heavenly Voices

To get from Liuku to Pianma one must pass a Lisu village called Baihualing.

The church here has a unique 'voices of angels' performance, the acapella four part choir. The small village is only 20-odd kilometres away from Liuku, reachable in under half an hour. We walked along the field paths and were struck by the sweetest singing from the church, the hymns were sung from the heart, in the purest of voices, it sounded like they came straight from heaven. We walked quietly into the newly painted church, worship had already started. The hall was filled with villagers neatly dressed in Lisu traditional costume. After prayer, they sang hymns in Lisu language led by the pastor, the melody struck a familiar chord, it was the same I used to sing at Christian primary school morning assembly. The words were different, but the melody was identical, *praise the lord and Jesus save me...*



1. There are still many places along the Nujiang River banks where the flying pulley is essential. The pictured villager is trying to 'fly' their pig across the river for sale. (by Wang Chen)

2. Every student who studies near Nujiang River carries a flying fox wheel in their school bag. (by Stephen Or)

3. Nujiang River suspension bridge allows villagers to reach the outside world. (by Stephen Or)

4. Lisu villagers selling bananas at the market. (by Stephen Or)



Pianma where Heroes Fell

"For the valley was nothing less than an enclosed paradise of amazing fertility, in which the vertical difference of a few thousand feet spanned the whole gulf between temperate and tropical."

The rationale behind believing Nujiang River was the reference for Shangri-la is obvious, a plane crashed here during World War II, in the forests near Nujiang River's Pianma. *Lost Horizon* was set in World War

II, at a time of political turbulence in South Asia, a British consulate plane evacuating its citizens flew eastward over the borders of Tibet. It was forced to land in a mysterious valley that started the adventure of Shangri-

la. The mysterious valley in the book is, Nujiang River Canyon.

According to the book, the so called 'Blue Moon Valley' is the secret passage to Shangri-la, a mountain-encircled valley, with a vertical height of over one thousand feet. To get to the plane crash site at Pianma Port, one must climb over Gaoligong Mountain pass at 3,400 metres above sea level. In a distance



of just 90 kilometres, the difference in altitude is 2,500 metres. This is a crash course in the Nujiang River Canyon climate, to go from scorching summer to freezing winter in the space of one to two hours, exactly as described in the book and spans the tropical and temperate climates.

Perhaps you may wonder, as Pianma is hundreds of kilometres away from Bingzhongluo, Conway couldn't have walked all that way to Shangri-la. However, Bingzhongluo lies at the core of the famous World War II aviation route

known as the Camel's Hump Route. Over 40 planes crashed in the Nujiang River Canyon forests during the war.

Old pilots from those days remember, on sunny days, they could fly by the reflection of crashed plane debris, such that they coined a new name 'Aluminium Valley'. While I was at Gongshan's Dimaluo Village searching for the century old church, I met villagers who found plane debris while herding sheep, as well there is the story of saving the English pilot at Bingzhongluo Village. All signs point to the fact this may be the very



1. The uninhabited Hengduan Mountain Ranges at the meeting point of Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet is the area of the famous Camel's Hump Route traverses. During WWII more than 500 planes crashed here. (by Wang Chen)

2. The C-53 transporter which crashed in the primitive forests of the China-Myanmar border has been re-assembled and lies in the Pianma Camel's Hump aviation hump museum. (by Stephen Or)



place the plane landed in *Lost Horizon*. The Camel's Hump plane that crashed in the virgin forests of Pianma is still in one piece, but its pilot and passengers have not been found until this day, they were likely picked up by people from Shangri-la.

Pianma — the Town that Prospered on Timber

To get to Pianma, one must first pass through the capital of Nujiang River Prefecture — Liuku. This remote town has flourished ever since the capital was relocated from Lushui to here. The buildings in town were all added in the last few years, making it seem no different from other Chinese towns. It is only 20 kilometres distance between Liuku and Pianma, but the dense mountains made our journey three hours longer, the vehicle winding endlessly on the mountain roads. We passed Luzhang, the old township of Lushui along the way, famous for hot springs bathhouses. Around Chinese New Year, the Lisu people from the mountains would come and soak in the springs with their families. Men and women share the same bath without embarrassment; the only people feeling awkward are those taking pictures on the sidelines.

Liuku is low in altitude, nestled in a basin among the mountains, after we crossed the Pianma mountain pass it was all downhill, in half an hour we arrived in Pianma. It is situated in the Gaoligong

Mountain hinterlands, it borders Myanmar on three sides — south, north and west, just 200 kilometres away from Myitkyna, the capital of Myanmar's Kachin State. Pianma's famous resistance against the British memorial in the 1930s and the World War II Camel's Hump Aviation Route museum lie at the town's busiest intersection. A battered C-53 transporter plane body has been reassembled. Everything on the plane, from wireless transmitter, to instrument panels is perfectly

intact. Even the pilot's pen and glasses can be seen in the cockpit.

Around 2 kilometres west is the China-Myanmar border, unfortunately because the crossing is only for local people at the provincial level, it isn't open to Hong Kong and Macao residents, while mainlanders (with their identification cards) can go to the China-Myanmar no.16 border monument for the view and to take a photo. I couldn't go to the border, so I stayed in town to wander around. The town is full of timber processing plants and timber trucks, logs more than a metre thick in diameter lie in piles on the roadside. For over a century this has been a hub for timber trade, it's only until recent years, due to China's ban on logging that reliance has grown on timber imported from Myanmar, making Pianma a natural import channel, bringing prosperity to the town.

Translated by Cheng Lei

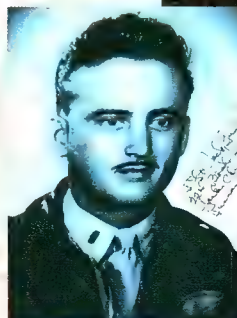
1. Deep in the mountains, the China-Myanmar Pianma Port. (by Stephen Or)

2. Pianma's Resistance against the British, Heroes Memorial. (by Stephen Or)

3. Pictures of Camel's Hump Aviation Route pilots who died in combat. (by Stephen Or)

Camel's Hump Aviation Route

During the World War II battles in the Far East, after Japanese forces cut off the Yunnan-Myanmar Road, the US established an international strategic aviation route to transport supplies to China, it started from India's Assam in the west, flew north into Tibet, then cruised for an hour close to the edge of the 'roof of the world' the Himalayas, before heading east across the ranges, Gaoligong Mountain, Hengduan Mountain, Sa'erwen River, Nujiang River, Lancang River, Jinsha River, past Daliangshan and Xiaoliangshan mountains at the juncture of Sichuan and Yunnan to reach Kunming and Chengdu. The average altitude of the mountains was 4,500-5,500 metres, but at the time fully loaded transporters could only fly as high as 3,500 metres, less than the height of many of the mountains. Consequently the planes could only traverse the valleys, making the route extremely dangerous. In less than three years, 563 planes crashed in the primitive forests of Gaoligong Mountain and over 1,500 pilots are buried in this red soil.



Travel Tips for the Greater Shangri-la Region

Greater Shangri-la — Quest For The Lost Horizon (suggested itinerary)

D1 Hong Kong ⇄ Guangzhou ⇄ Shangri-la (Zhongdian)

Arrive at Shangri-la Airport at noon, take a bus to Dukezong Ancient City. Visit Sumtsen Ling Monastery Temple in the afternoon, then ride horses at Yila Meadows, evening stroll in the Dukezong Ancient City, have Tibetan dinner at the city's Potala Hut, stay at local residences.

■ **Tips:** There are only two flights from Guangzhou to Shangri-la per week, most depart in the mornings, if leaving from Hong Kong, it's best to get to Guangzhou the night before, to avoid missing transfers.

D2 Shangri-la ⇄ Napahai ⇄ Nixi Village ⇄ Benzilan ⇄ Baimang Snow Mountain ⇄ Kawa Karpo Snow Mountain

Shoot Sumtsen Ling Monastery Temple at dawn, shoot scenery of Napahai's Meadows and Tibetan Nixi Village. Lunch at Benzilan, head for Kawa Karpo, shoot Jinsha River No.1 Bend on the way, see Dongzhulin Temple, Baimang Snow Mountain, Kawa Karpo and other sights. At dinner, drink red wine with yak meat hotpot, stay at inns near Feilai Temple.

■ **Tips:** Dongzhulin Temple holds Buddha-dance ceremonies every 25th-29th of the 8th month in the Tibetan calendar. Baimang Snow Mountain has gorgeous autumn colours in October. If staying at inns around Feilai Temple, pick rooms facing Kawa Karpo Snow Mountain so it's easier to shoot the sunrise in the morning.

D3 Kawa Karpo Snow Mountain ⇄ Mingyong Glaciers ⇄ Lancang River Canyon ⇄ Cizhong Church

Shoot the sunrise over Kawa Karpo at Feilai Temple, Tibetans burning incense to worship the mountain. Then shoot Mingyong Glaciers, wall-hanging farmland, travel along Lancang River downwards, sights such as Moon Bay Canyon, Jiabi, Guniang natural villages, Lancang River's Tibetans using flying pulley to cross the river. Arrive in Cizhong at sunset, shoot the century-old Cizhong Church and local farms. Taste Cizhong red wine and rustic dishes, stay with farming families near the church.

■ **Tips:** Each August is the harvest season for Cizhong rose honey grapes, aside from tasting grapes, you can also see how Tibetans make wine. Also, try to visit Cizhong on the weekend, so you can see Tibetans gathering at the century-old church.

D4~6 Hike the Missionaries' Route (Cizhong to Dimaluo)

The missionaries' route takes three days, the first day, set off from Cizhong Village, hike 6 hours to Dewazhuo camp (3,500 metres) and stay overnight, on the second day, climb over Biluo Snow Mountain pass Shelalaka (4,300 metres) to camp at Sewalong River Valley campsite (3,350 metres), the third day requires a 5.5 hour hike to climb over Baihanluo Mountain (3,900 metres) to the final destination — Dimaluo Village, visit Dimaluo Church.

■ **Tips:** Baihanluo Village's Baihanluo wild fruit wine is just as famous as Cizhong red wine, don't forget to try. When climbing Biluo Snow Mountain, take enough warm clothes to ward against the cold, also be equipped to fight off the leeches that abound on the mountain. If you're not planning on hiking, you can take the bus from Yanmen to Weixi, then transfer to Dali to get to Nujiang River Prefecture's township Liuku (requires 3 days).

D7 Dimaluo Village ⇄ Gongshan ⇄ Bingzhongluo

In the morning, depart by car from Dimaluo Village for Gongshan, change vehicles to reach Bingzhongluo, shoot Nujiang River's no.1 Bend, Nu-style stone houses en-route, in the afternoon, tour Peach Blossom Island and Zhongding Village church near Bingzhongluo, visit Puhua Temple. Stay at Bingzhongluo's local residences.

■ **Tips:** Peach Blossom Island is best visited during March and April. Zhongding Church is not normally open to public, if you want to visit, see Aunt Ding, she has the keys.



Lao Mudeng Church

D8 Bingzhongluo ⇄ Zhongding Village ⇄ Wuli Village ⇄ Qiunatong ⇄ Bingzhongluo (on foot)

Early start, to shoot Bingzhongluo's sunrise. Go westward to Shimenguan, for a close encounter with Nujiang River. Keep walking along Shimenguan, visit Wuli Village, pass Chaohong Bridge, go via the Tea Horse Ancient Route to the northernmost village in Yunnan — Qiunatong, return to Bingzhongluo. Stay in Bingzhongluo local residences.

■ **Tips:** This journey doesn't have to be made on foot all the way, you can hire a car or hitch a ride to Qiunatong, then make your way back to Bingzhongluo, it saves time and ensures the best shooting times, morning and evening are not wasted on the road.

D9 Bingzhongluo ⇄ Gongshan ⇄ Fugong ⇄ Pihe ⇄ Zhiziluo

Shoot sunrise scenes at Bingzhongluo and Nujiang River No.1 Bend, head for Lao Mudeng Church in Fugong's Pihe Township. On the way, visit Shiyueliang (stone moon), Feilaishi (flight stone), Nujiang River's Tiger leaping stone. In the afternoon, tour the deserted city Zhiziluo, have Nu delicacies for dinner, including lacquer oil chicken, vinegar wine, etc. Stay at Lao Mudeng residences.

■ **Tips:** The deserted city Zhiziluo is best at dusk, during services at Lao Mudeng church, catch the Nu people's hymn singing, on a par with the heavenly Lisu acapella four-part choir at Baihualing.

D10 Lao Mudeng ⇄ Pihe ⇄ Lushui ⇄ Pianma ⇄ Liuku

Start with shooting sunrise at Nujiang River Canyon and Lao Mudeng Church, go to Lushui County to shoot the 'bathing party'. Climb over the Pianma Storm Pass to get to Pianma town, visit the Resistance Against the British Hero Memorial and WWII Camel's Hump Aviation Route Museum, return to Liuku in the afternoon, taste hand-eaten basket rice of the Lisu people, drink 'same heart' wine. Stay in Liuku.

■ **Tips:** 'Bathing party' is held in Nujiang River Prefecture every Chinese New Year — from the first to the 6th days of the new year, at the natural springs near Lushui County, with activities like 'climb the pole of knives, dive into a sea of fire', a perfect opportunity to shoot different ethnic groups in Nujiang River Prefecture.

D11 Liuku ⇄ Baihualing Church ⇄ Liuku ⇄ Dali

Attend worship at Shangjiang Township's Baihualing Church in the morning, listen to the acapella four part choir. Return to Liuku at noon, take the afternoon bus to Dali (3-hour ride), hang out at bars in Dali. Stay in Dali.

■ **Tips:** If visiting Nujiang River around Easter or Christmas, you can join their celebrations and worship activities at the local villages, they're even more festive than the Chinese New Year, we recommend going to Mazhang Village — not far from Baihualing Church. It is also a good choice to visit the churches on weekends, if you want to hear Baihualing Church's four-part choir singing, make reservations with the village church deacon beforehand.



Zhongdian idyllic scenery



Meili scripture carving men



Dimaluo Church

D12 Dali⇒Shenzhen⇒Hong Kong

Enjoy boating on Erhai Lake in the morning, then tour the Chongsheng Temple and Three Pagodas, in the afternoon fly back to Hong Kong via Shenzhen.

Tips: if you have two or three extra days, why not also visit famous attractions of northwest Yunnan Province like Lulong, Yulong Snow Mountain and Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Climate

Diqing Prefecture: low temperatures so rug up, with great temperature differences between day and night, sometimes there are 'four seasons in one day'. The rainy season is usually from late May to early October. The best time to visit Shangri-la is when spring turns into summer with mild temperatures, lush grasslands, a profusion of wild flowers. While autumn shows off Shangri-la's brilliant autumn colours, winter is usually the season pilgrims come to worship at Kawa Karpo Snow Mountain.

Nujiang River Prefecture: the climate differs from north to south, Liuku has an average temperature of 22°C, the hottest month is in June (25°C), the coldest month is in January (13°C), annual precipitation of 1,010 millimetres. Gongshan, Fugong has an average temperature of 15°C, while July being the hottest month (23°C). January being the coldest (8°C), annual precipitation 1,600 millimetres. The rainy season is from May to October. It is best to visit during October and April.

Accommodation

Zhongdian:

Diqing Hotel No.11, Changzheng Road 180-480 yuan / standard room

Zangdi International Youth Hostel No.98, Heping Road 25 yuan / bed Tel.: (0887) 822 8671

Dukezong Ancient City:

International Youth Hostel No.177, Jinlong Street 25 yuan / bed Tel.: (0887) 822 7505

Highland Barley Inn No.76 Beimen Street 30 yuan / bed Tel.: (0887) 823 2100

Mount Kawa Karpo (Meili):

Meili Villa Feilai Temple scenic lookout 120 yuan / standard room Tel.: (0887) 689 6412

Gizhong:

Rose Honey Red Wine Inn Next to the Gizhong Village Church 20 yuan / bed Tel.: (0887) 853 6113

Liuku:

Nujiang River Prefecture Hotel Liuku Renmin North Road 100 yuan / standard room

Tel.: (0886) 362 6888

Baiyi Hotel No. 38 Renmin Road, Liuku 150-180 / standard room Tel.: (0886) 362 7988

Fugong:

Postal Hotel Next to the county bus station 120 yuan / standard room Tel.: (0886) 341 2900

Minzheng Welfare Reception Centre 100 yuan / standard room Tel.: (0886) 341 1851

Pithec:

Yazhen Outdoor Club Lao Mudeng Village 20 / bed Tel.: 139 8866 0041

Gongshan:

Township Government Reception Centre Next to the Township bus station

Tel.: (0886) 351 1929 140 yuan / standard room

Bingzhongluo:

Yudong Hotel / Chama Hotel Bingzhongluo Township Main Street 100-120 / standard room

Ding Dama Nu-people Home Zhongding Village 20 / bed Tel.: (0886) 358 1144

Dali:

MCA At the south gate of Dali Ancient City 120 / standard room Tel.: (0872) 267 3666

Transport

By air:

Shangri-la:

Guangzhou→Diqing, Shangri-la, departs 7:10 am every Friday, arrive at 9:45 am, 1,590 yuan

Kunming→Diqing, Shangri-la, four daily flights, duration 50 minutes, fares cost 700 yuan

Liuku:

Kunming→Baoshan (fare costs 440 yuan, duration: 40 minutes), then take a bus to Liuku and

Fugong. Baoshan has services to the two places, from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm, tickets cost 20 yuan, and takes around 3 hours.

■ By road:

Kunming→Shangri-la (720 kilometres), 12 hours, departs at 8:20 am. There are also many sleeper buses departing between 1 pm and 7 pm.

Shangri-la→Diqing (192 kilometres), around 5 hours, four services run daily from 7:20 am to 12:00 pm.

Diqing→Cizhong (81 kilometres), medium sized bus departs at 2 pm

Many long distance buses depart from Liuku to places like Kunming, Dali, Baoshan, Tengchong, Fugong and Gongshan.

There is a bus from Liuku to Fugong every half hour, the journey takes around 3 hours. The distance between Liuku and Dali is around 200 kilometres and takes around 5 hours, Liuku bus station has half-hourly buses to Dali. The distance from Liuku to Kunming is roughly 600 kilometres, a 12-hour ride. From Gongshan to Bingzhongluo (50 kilometres), no set timetables, services run from 7 am to 5 pm, tickets cost 8~10 yuan, the ride takes around 1 hour (the last return bus is 4~5 pm). To get from Liuku to Pianma, at the bus station there are mini-buses charging 25 yuan / person. Return bus departs from the museum. Chartering a car costs 60~70 yuan / person.

Diqing Bus Station tel.: (0887) 841 2115

Liuku Bus Station tel.: (0886) 362 2426

Gongshan Bus Station tel.: (0886) 351 1496

■ Carhiring:

There are different vehicles for rental next to the bus station — Jeeps, mini-vans, Santonas, etc. Hiring Jeeps usually cost 600~800 / day, vans cost 300 yuan / day. Chartering a car to tour Shangri-la and go to Kawa Karpo Snow Mountain, usually requires 3 days, vans cost 300~400 / day, seats 5~6 people. (recommendation: Tibetan driver Zhishi Qilin Phone: 139 8873 8009 Number plates: 雲R 13639)

■ **Hiking:** It is a three day walk from Cizhong to climb over Biluo Snow Mountain, to reach Dimaluo Village in Nuijiang River's Gongshan, it's best to find a Tibetan guide to carry some of your luggage, to ease the trekking exhaustion, guides cost 80 yuan per day including tips. Hiring a farm truck from Dimaluo to Pengdang Township, to Bingzhongluo intersection, costs 30 yuan / person. Chartering a car to Gongshan Township costs 150 yuan.

Shangri-la's Gourmet

■ Diqing Prefecture:



Pianma pass

Yak-butter tea — an essential part of the Tibetan diet, made from tea brick and yak butter. It is high in energy and helps ward off cold, as well as quenching thirst.

Qingke (or highland barley wine) — made from highland barley, low alcohol content, easy to drink.

Zanba — dry highland barley and cooked, grind into flour, eaten with yak butter tea. Zanba is highly nutritious and easy to carry.

Pipa meat — Tibetan style marinated meat. Take out the innards and bones of a pig, keep the body intact, cool, then fill and rub with spices like Sichuan pepper, nutmeg, salt, sew closed, marinate with a stone slab pressed on top.

■ Nuijiang River

Shiban baba or Stone pancakes — ancient food of the Gongshan county's Dulong and Nu people, they are pancakes made from buckwheat or corn batter and cooked on a stone slab, crispy and delicious.

Vinegar wine — usually made from corn, sorghum, wheat or millet, with an alcohol content of just over ten per cent, slightly sweet, thirst quenching and refreshing. It's both nutritious and stimulates the appetite, offering a nice pick-me-up, no wonder it's a favourite drink of the Lisu people, who also call it 'valley beer'.

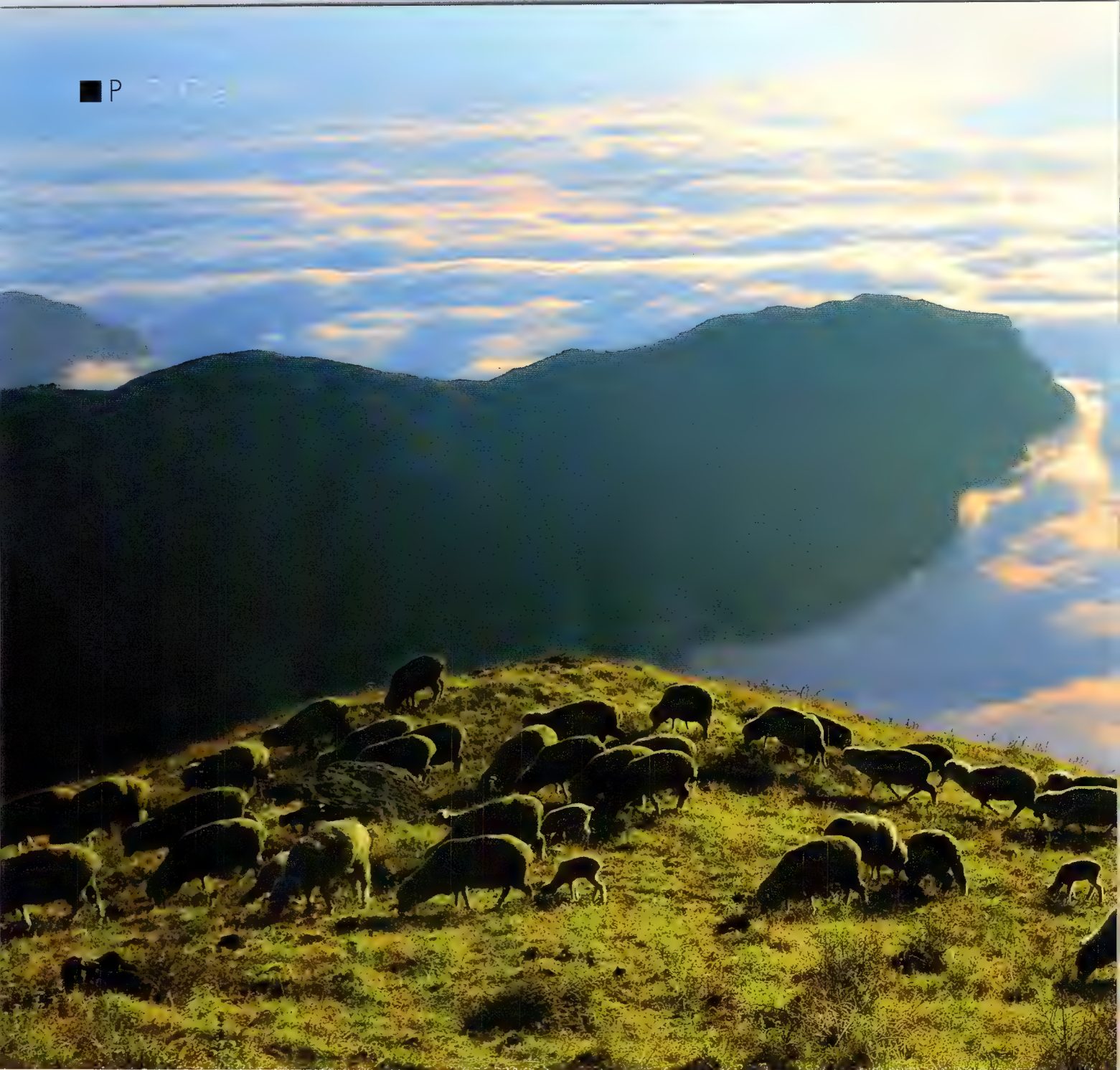
Lacquer dish — a local treat loved by the Lisu and Nu people. The dish uses oil pressed from the lacquer tree seed — called lacquer oil, which is heated and fried with rice wine or chicken, great for improving circulation and boosting vitality.



Zhiziluo ruin city



Stone moon



Crane-watch in the Snow-covered Zhaotong

Photos by Gao Hong, Zhang Jiangtao Article by Zhang Jiangtao

Dashanbao of Zhaotong located at the boundary of Sichuan and Yunnan in southwest China is the home of black-necked cranes in winter, and also the ideal place for photographic fans to take pictures. It has clear blue sky, meandering mountain ranges and limpid and blue lake. You can see crowds of black-necked cranes and local people live in peace and harmony.



If you are lucky enough you can take nice pictures of Dashaobao no matter in spring, summer, autumn or winter only when you feel the extensive, exquisite and simple of the mountain with your heart. The same time you can also feel the harmonious atmosphere of peaceful coexistence between people and the nature at the process of taking pictures of the black-necked cranes.

1. Sea of clouds over Mount Jigong

When there is mist in Dashaobao a magnificent scene would appear with sea of clouds over Mount Jigong. Meandering and steep Mount Jigong presents a view of rare magnificence looking like a wonderland. A vivid sheep herding picture was taken with extensive sea of clouds and steep mountain ranges as the background and a herdsman and sheep as the foreground. (by Gao Hong)

Suggested route:

Day 1 Hong Kong-Kunming-Dongchuan-Huize-Zhaotong

Go to Zhaotong from Kunming at noon which takes about four or five hours driving on the highway passing by Dongchuan and Huize. On the way you can take pictures of the scenic spots, such as the unique red earth of Yunnan, grassland and Dahailiangzi of Huize and the black-necked cranes of Daqiao Township. Stay in Zhaotong City.

Day 2 Zhaotong-Yangwo

You may charter a vehicle from Zhaotong to Dashaobao with a distance of 79 kilometres. It will take about five or six hours to Yangwo, the seat of Dashaobao Township government because the mountain path is under construction. You will pass by a small town, named Longshu and some mountain villages surrounded by red earth which look very beautiful. Overnight in the inn of Yangwo.

Day 3 Yangwo-Dahaizi-Dashaobao Village-Xiaohedi Village-Hainaogu Village
You'd better go to Dahaizi first to take pictures of the black-necked cranes

in morning mist and then go to Dashaobao Village and Xiaohedi Village to take pictures of local houses and local custom when the cranes fly away. The original inhabitants here are simple and honest, and are dressed with distinctive nationality character. If you like to take pictures of folk customs, you will gain unexpected rewards. Go to Hainaogu Village located at the lower end of Dahaizi in the afternoon to take pictures of the black-necked cranes. The different configuration of the earth's surface here will give you a new feeling. Stay in Yangwo.

Day 4 Yangwo-Tiaodenghe-Mount Jigong-Yangwo

Going to Tiaodenghe in the morning to take pictures of black-necked cranes, yellow duck and bar-headed goose hunting food in the wilds and flock of sheep as well and then go to Mount Jigong to take pictures of sea of clouds. The mountain is dangerously steep stretching far into the distance. The sea of clouds is a magnificent sight. Then stay in Yangwo.

Day 5 Yangwo-Zhaotong-Kunming-Hong Kong

2. Dashanbao

The weather in Dashanbao is changeable. If you can see the sky studded with stars in the night which indicates a clear day in the next day, that means you can have chance to see fog there. When the warm sun is shining over boundless land the fog looks glittering and translucent and the distant meandering mountain ranges are vaguely visible. (by Gao Hong)

3. Coming Back from Herding in the Cold Wind

The weather was bad and the outside temperature was -7°C . Was it okay to take pictures in such a bad weather? At five in the afternoon I was eager to see the black-necked cranes in Dahanzi so I drove towards there. On the way I saw two villagers coming back with crowds of sheep from herding against the cold wind. What a nice picture! (by Zhang Jiangtao)





4. Black-necked Cranes in Dahaizi

Dashanbao is often covered by heavy fog. However, you can still take nice pictures even in bad weather because the black-necked cranes have their distinctive habits and characteristics. They fly away from Dahaizi in where staying overnight, to look for food in the wild country after morning fog disappeared, so you'd better taking pictures of the black-necked cranes in the early morning in Daihaizi. In addition, the scene of sunrise in Daihaizi is also picturesque with the red sun above mountain in the distance while cranes singing and dancing gracefully. People who have seen the scenery there all marvelled at its unique beauty. Staff of the Supervising Station of the Black-necked Cranes Protection Area put food at one and seven in the afternoon everyday. Those are the best time to take pictures of the black-necked cranes because crowds of them come back Dahaizi to eat.

In the feeding place in Daihaizi a crowd of black-necked cranes are hunting for food in the snowfield. The distant mountains and villages are vaguely visible in the mist making people cheerful and open. (by Zhang Jiangtao)

Translated by Wang Zengfen

Tips for photo-taking:

The best time for shooting:

The black-necked cranes fly away from Dashanbao around 22 April each year and fly back around 22 September so winter is the best time for people to take pictures there. February is the heat period for the black-necked cranes so you can see crowds of black-necked cranes chasing one another and dancing gracefully in Daihaizi.

Photographic equipment:

It is better to use 400 mm zoom lens when taking pictures of black-necked cranes because they are always vigilant. In addition, you'd better bring a 20 mm wide-angle lens with you since Dashanbao has a wide vision that you can take nice pictures of it with the wide-angle lens. Medium focal length is also necessary for taking pictures of colourful clothes dressed by local people from various ethnic groups, such as Miao and others.

Transportation:

It is about 372 kilometres from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, with the highway from Kunming to Zhaotong. The road condition from Zhaotong to Dashanbao is poor, especially in foul weather so only cross-country vehicle can go through. In winter days difference in temperature between day and night varies greatly in Dashanbao and there is ice on the road. To make doubly sure you had better set out after ten in the morning in Zhaotong. It is convenient for people to go to Zhaotong from Kunming. You may take airplane in Kunming to Zhaotong or No. 2004 train getting off at Zhaotong, and there are minibuses back and forth between Zhaotong and Dashanbao with a ticket of 20 yuan.

Accommodation:

Zhaotong Huayuan Hotel (three-star)

Address: 50 Fengxia Road, Zhaotong City, Yunnan Province

Tel.: (0870)223 8888

Heyuanzhuang Inn in Yangwo Town Tel.: (0870)286 5009 about 15~20 yuan each day per person



One Country, One Card

Article by Mooker



Now the membership card for travel product subscription makes it all so easy to travel and buy tickets. You can buy tickets online anytime, anywhere and pick up big discounts too. Plus, you may have the tickets delivered to Hong Kong. In addition to air tickets and hotels, other travel products you can subscribe to include admission tickets to scenic zones and vacation packages. With one card, countrywide travel in China is as easy as ABC.

Troublesome to Fly at Shenzhen Airport?

To most Hongkongers, the thought of flying from the Shenzhen Airport, is just too troublesome. But in fact, there are good reasons to fly at the Shenzhen Airport. There are three route options from Hong Kong to Shenzhen Airport, each of which takes more or less 100 minutes.

The first route is railway. You can take the MTR to Lo Wu (\$34.8), pass through customs, and take K568 mini-bus at the ground floor of Lo Wu Shopping Centre to the airport (20 yuan). The mini-bus trip will take you about 100 minutes. Or you can take the subway at Lo Wu and alight at Science Museum Station, where you can take the airport shuttle bus at Hualian Building. The shuttle bus service at Hualian Building is very regular. The fare is 20 yuan.

The second route is by water. You can check in at the Shenzhen Airport City Departure Building at HK-Macao Ferry Terminal before you go by boat to Fuyong Port (\$200), where you can take the free shuttle bus to Shenzhen Airport. The last leg on the free shuttle bus will take you just 5 minutes. This route is the most expensive, but takes less time.

The last route is via the highway. You can handle the boarding formalities at the Shenzhen Airport City Departure Building at Kowloon Station of the Airport Express before you head directly to the Shenzhen Airport by airport shuttle bus. The whole trip takes you 100 minutes, and the fare is \$90.

Why Buy Mainland Air Tickets?

In terms of price, the full fare of an air ticket from Shenzhen to Beijing is 1,750 yuan, while that from Hong Kong to Beijing is \$1,725. It seems that Hong Kong air tickets are even cheaper than those in mainland China. But don't forget that tax and fuel surcharge in Hong Kong combined are \$520 or maybe more, whereas the amount of the two items on the mainland is only 150 yuan. For this alone, you save \$350. Besides, air tickets on the mainland in low season are 70% to 80% off!

In addition to money saved from airport tax and fuel surcharge, the second advantage of departing from Shenzhen is the numerous flight options. Hong Kong has relatively more flights only to hot travel cities like Beijing, Shanghai and

Xi'an, but Shenzhen Airport offers you a long list of flights to big cities in addition to secondary or smaller cities.

How to Book?

First, you need to become a member of the websites by registering online or calling the website subscription telephone hotlines. Free service manuals and membership cards are available at the service counters of the websites at airports and hotels. Already a member, you can perform real-time transactions or subscribe to various travel products on the websites. The procedure takes just a few clicks.

Online Booking:

Step 1: Log in to the website with the membership code or the registered telephone number.

Step 2: Select the travel product needed.

Step 3: Select 'Real-time Transaction' or 'Search Subscription'.

Step 4: Select other parameters according to the instructions of the system.

Step 5: After the selection is done, press 'PO Payment' or 'Book'.

Step 6: Subscription is completed.

Telephone booking: The procedure is exactly the same as that of website subscription. The only difference is that you call the hotlines of the websites instead of logging in to the websites.

How to Pay?

You can choose to pay in cash, with credit card, by online PPS or through banking service. To buy an air ticket in a mainland city, you can choose cash payment upon ticket delivery. For elong



and Ctrip, you cannot choose cash payment upon ticket delivery if you buy a mainland ticket in Hong Kong. You can only purchase an electronic ticket with your credit card as a guarantee. You need to settle the payment in cash or with your credit card before you get the ticket at the mainland departure airport on the day of departure. Mangocity has set up a branch in Hong Kong. You can choose to pay in cash, by credit card, by online PPS or through banking service.

How to get your Ticket?

For a mainland ticket buyer, the three websites offer a free delivery service. As elong and Ctrip free delivery service is unavailable for Hong Kong buyers. If you choose Mangocity, you can enjoy free delivery service in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong SAR: For a transaction completed before 11 am, the ticket will be delivered by 2 pm to 6 pm or 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm on the same day. For a transaction completed before 5 pm, the ticket will be delivered by 9 am to 1 pm the next day. If the ticket delivery time slot is on Saturday afternoon, Sunday or public holidays, it will be extended to 9 am to 1 pm of the first work day that follows.

If you choose to get the ticket from

any of the branches of CTS, you need to reserve three work days before you need to get it.

Mainland China and overseas regions: If you need to get the ticket in a country or region other than Hong Kong, Mangocity will arrange courier service for you.

Charge

1. Except for outlying islands, delivery to places in Hong Kong is free.
2. For delivery of your ticket on Sunday and public holidays, you can contact the clerk to make special arrangements. The delivery charge on Sunday and public holidays to places in Hong Kong (outlying islands excluded) is HK\$50.
3. The delivery charge to countries and regions other than Hong Kong is as specified.

Other Value-added Services

The competition among mainland travel product subscription websites is fierce. Each company offers all it has to attract tourists. For example, Ctrip rolls out the commitments of '1-hour Passenger Passage' (ticket booking one hour before departure) and 'Hotel Lower-rate Compensation' (compensation for the lower rate offered at the hotel

reception). The '1-hour Passenger Passage' ensures the shortest time taken by the customer to book a ticket and board the plane.

The 'Hotel Lower-rate Compensation' service ensures that the customer check in the hotel at a more favourable rate. Ctrip guarantees that, if the member finds the membership rate of the hotel higher than the reception rate for the same or similar rooms, Ctrip will offer a certain number of points or offer compensation for the price difference after it verifies the rate difference.

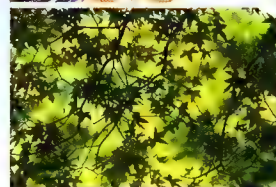
elong offers various travel consumption cards. Jointly with China CITIC Bank, it offers the CITIC elong Card that provides such functions as travel, investment and financial management, and daily consumption. elong rolls out credit service cards by working with other financial service organizations. By cooperating with Hainan Airlines, China Unicom, Yahoo!, and Motorola, elong offers customers a few multi-function co-branded cards. By relying on the hotel and resort resources of China Travel Service (Holdings) Hong Kong Limited, Mangocity is able to book rooms in the high season. Mangocity makes travel easier.

Translated by Zhang Boli

Comparison of Travel Product Subscription Websites

	Ctrip	Mangocity	elong
Headquarters	Shanghai	Shenzhen	Beijing
Inception	1999	2005	1999
Size	Ctrip sets up branches in over 10 cities all over the country, including Beijing and Guangzhou, with 7,000 employees.	Mangocity sets up regional branches in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Guangzhou and other metropolitans.	elong has over 2,000 employees.
Booking Tel.	400 880 3366	40066 — 40066 36040066 (Hong Kong)	400 810 1010
Web site	english.ctrip.com	www.mangocity.com.hk/english/home.htm	www.elong.net
Hotel	Ctrip has established cooperative relationships with over 28,000 hotels in 5,900 cities of 134 countries around the globe.	Mangocity has established cooperative relationships with over 4,000 hotels in 300 plus cities in China.	Elong has established cooperative relationships with 4,300 domestic hotels in 338 cities and with 40,000 international star-hotels in 120 countries.
Air ticket	Free delivery of air tickets in 48 domestic cities.	Distribution service of air tickets in over 50 cities in China.	The network covers 57 major business travel cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.
Vacation product	Over 1,000 vacation routes that cover more than 200 vacation destinations at home and abroad.	Over 1,000 domestic and international vacation routes.	No vacation products.
Authorized shops	3,000 authorized shops in 15 famous tourist cities across the country.	Over 5,000 authorized shops in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macao.	Over 4,000 specially selected authorised discount shops in the country.
Travel information	Website information and travel books and magazines, including Ctrip Guide of China.	Website information	Website information
Others	Ctrip funds the 'Travel Insurance Against Natural Disaster' worth 1 million yuan.	The hotel and resort resources of China Travel Service (Holdings) Hong Kong Limited.	Ticketing service of Eurail Pass.

China Tourism Photo Library



China Tourism Photo Library provides high quality stock photos specializing in Chinese contents on a broad range of subjects covering landscape, business and industry, culture, people, ethnic minority and much more. Images provided by us are suitable for creative professionals, business users, news media, and consumers.

We can help you to find what you need and enhance your creativity. Don't miss out, call us for further information.

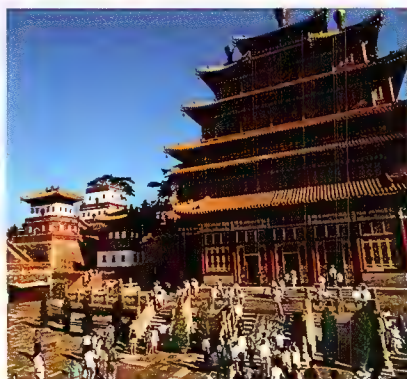
E-mail: plib@hkctp.com.hk

Tel: 852-2561 8001

Fax: 852-2561 8057

25 Jul ~ 25 Aug

Shanxi



Wutai Mountain Tourist Month

Large-scale Buddhist ritualistic ceremonies, folk art activities, and a large mule and horse fair. During the month, the entire mountain is enshrouded in religious atmosphere, as monks from all over the country gather at Taihuai Town, Wutai County, performing Buddhist rites to save the souls of the dead and chanting Buddhist sutras. The event gives the traveller an opportunity to visit the cluster of temples and monasteries on the Wutai Mountain, and learn something about local habits and customs.

18 ~ 20 Jul

Heilongjiang

China Heilongjiang Forest Ecotour Festival

Yichun Forest Administrative Bureau will organise the Forest Ecotour Festival. Activities include the inauguration ceremony, theatrical performances, and forest ecotours, in addition to the exhibitions and sales of wood carvings, tree-root sculptures, traditional paintings on birch bark.



26 ~ 28 Jul

Yunnan

Yunnan Yi Torch Festival

This takes place in the Shucun Town of the Lunan Yi Autonomous County, and the city of Chuxiong in the Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture. According to a legend among the Yi people, once there lived a demon king who terrorised the local people. During an uprising the local people bound torches to the horns and hind legs of a herd of goats and eliminated the demon king. During this festival nowadays, the locals lit torches for an entire night's merry-making in celebration of the victory. There will also be archery, horse racing, bull fights, and wrestling.



11 Jul ~ 17 Aug

Hong Kong

International Arts Carnival 2008

The Carnival brings physical theatre, music, black light theatre, dance, musical, drama, juggling, puppetry, mask theatre and film to families. A series of extension activities such as workshops, guided tours, exhibitions, fun day and outreach programmes are also in line. The programmes will be held in various theatres and city halls.

16 ~ 26 Jul

Taiwan

The World Games 2009 Kaohsiung

All kinds of sports will take place in the city, including Karate, ju-jitsu, badminton, women's softball, and bowling. Come to see the games, and visit the city at its fittest stage along your way.

15 Jul

Inner Mongolia

Nadam Grassland Tourist Festival

In Mongolian the word 'nadam' means 'amusement and entertainment'. The Nadam Festival is a traditional occasion for Mongols to get together for a few days of festivity. You can find horse racing, archery, and wrestling; the Mani Festival, Yuan-dynasty imperial banquets, wedding in the ethnic Erdos style, sacrificial rituals at Genghis Khan's mausoleum, tours of the Hot Spring Forest, Mongolian folklore show; and business activities all here during the time.



30 Aug ~ 5 Sep

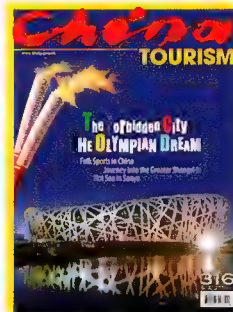
Tibet



Shoton Festival in Tibet

The festival takes place in Lhasa Tibet Autonomous Region. In the Tibetan language the word, 'shoton' means 'yogurt banquet'. By Buddhist discipline, monks are confined in their monasteries for several dozen days until summer is over. The day the 'confinement' is over, the locals treat the monks to banquets, at which yogurt is served. Tourists can find 'Sunning the Buddha' (giant Tangkha-portraits of the Buddha brought out of the monasteries and unfolded in the sun for display), Tibetan opera performances, and trade fairs.

READERSHIP SURVEY



Our readers' ideas and opinions are important to us. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine. Thank you!

1. What did you enjoy about this issue (E316) and why?

2. Was there anything about this issue that you thought could be improved?

3. Where did you first encounter *China Tourism*?

- ☐ Subscription ☐ Newsstand ☐ From friends ☐ Bookstore (Name of bookstore: _____)
☐ Hotel (Name of hotel: _____) ☐ Airline VIP lounge (Name of airline: _____)

4. Why do you read *China Tourism*?

- ☐ Planning trips ☐ Business ☐ General Interest ☐ Other

5. How long have you been reading *China Tourism*?

- ☐ Since the beginning ☐ Less than 3 years ☐ 3 ~ 5 years ☐ 6 ~ 9 years ☐ More than 10 years

6. Which *China Tourism* articles are you most interested in reading?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book Review | <input type="checkbox"/> Challenges | <input type="checkbox"/> City Snaps | <input type="checkbox"/> Culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Customs |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel Picks | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscapes | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> New Attractions | <input type="checkbox"/> On the Way |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Profile | <input type="checkbox"/> Traveller's Corner | <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____ | | |

7. What information or topics you would like *China Tourism* to cover in the future?

8. What are your suggestions for improving the magazine?

9. How many times have you visited China?

- ☐ Less than 3 times ☐ 3 ~ 5 times ☐ More than 5 times

10. What is your favourite destination in China?

11. What other travel- or China-related publications do you read?

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Hong Kong Discovery | <input type="checkbox"/> HK Magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> Culture Hong Kong | <input type="checkbox"/> Others: _____ |

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May we contact you with further questions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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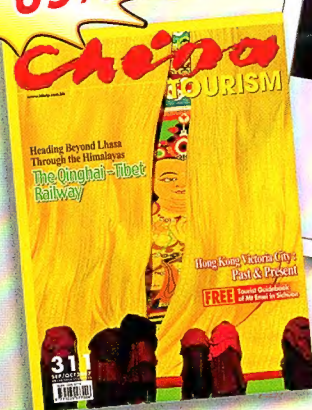
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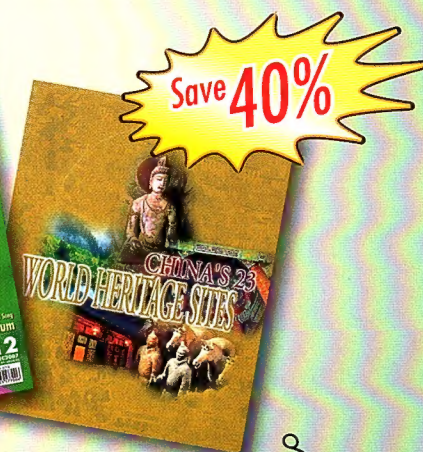


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FEATURE STORY

Mother of the Mountains Pamir Plateau



From a specific angle that the Pamirs is simple, simply using several heavy lines to outline — the Himalayas, Kunlun Mountains, Tianshan Mountains, Karokoram Mountains and Yarkant River.

Yet the Pamirs is also macroscopic, likes thunders in one's ears

— the roof of the World, Ancient Silk Road, Onion Range Ancient Road, Marco Polo Road. The Pamirs is also succinct, can be summarises as plateau Iceberg, castle of rock, and the tribe of Tajik people.



Discoveries

Conquer to Bodga Peak

This is a story without thrill and vertical limit; without any pain and hardship; is this a real climb? Others always think that climbers are desperado, taking life as gamble. But climbing not always necessarily thrills, what I anticipated is a tranquil and bored climb.



Customs

Swinging under Mount Hua

Now, swings are not commonly seen in cities. Urban children like to ride on roller coaster and pirate ship. Yet, the swing meeting at Sijia Village in Shaanxi Province is much more touching and interesting.

City's Snap

Carefree Luoyang

When mentioning Luoyang, one will relate it with Longmen Grottoes, Baima Temple and peonies instantly. Aside from those, there are ancient city selling all kinds of grocery, an interesting King of Zhou Square and full of relaxing spots around. The life of Luoyang people is surely carefree enough...



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